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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will first hear an address by His Excellency the Honourable Guido de Marco, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta, and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. de Marco (Malta): I join other delegations in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. We are confident that your ability and experience will successfully guide our work during this session. I also wish to express our gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, whose presidency was characterized by energy and drive.

Freedom first and foremost. That rallying cry has inspired peoples and nations throughout this century. It gave birth to brave acts of courage during two world conflicts. It gave sustenance in the struggle for decolonization. It gave stamina and resilience during and after the dark days of the cold war.

Freedom first and foremost. That was the solid platform on which citizens worldwide stood their ground whenever authoritarian regimes sought to erode democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Freedom first and foremost. That ideal buttressed President Roosevelt in his effort to give birth to the United Nations.

As we strive to build a better world and struggle to conquer the uncertainties of our times, we the peoples of the United Nations continue to cherish those four essential human freedoms identified by President Roosevelt in his speech to Congress on 6 January 1941: freedom of speech and expression — everywhere in the world; freedom of every person to worship God in his own way — everywhere in the world; freedom from want to secure for every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants — everywhere in the world; freedom from fear through a worldwide reduction of armaments so that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbour — anywhere in the world.

Underlining these four freedoms, President Roosevelt stressed that they were "a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation", not a "vision of a distant millennium".

For the past 53 sessions world leaders have gathered here in this General Assembly to take stock of humankind's progress in achieving those noble aims for which the United Nations was founded. Each year brings with it new unknowns, new challenges, new tragedies. Yet each year we also see movement, in small steps or in strides, towards a more secure world.

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Building a world where peace, justice and freedom reign supreme is a duty for all of us who serve in public office. This responsibility becomes more onerous as we advance towards the dawning of the new millennium.

Eight years ago I was privileged to serve this Assembly as its President. The future then beckoned. In 1989 the world had witnessed the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Millions had reacquired their freedom. In 1990 the idyllic aftermath of the Bush-Gorbachev Malta summit was shattered by the invasion of Kuwait. In those times of euphoric uncertainty I called on Member States to revitalize this General Assembly and ensure a symbiotic relationship between the Organization's principal organs. The call for reform prevailed. It bore fruit and continues to give results.

Reform is essential for the Organization's well-being. It is even more essential for the future of humankind.

Eight years ago I signalled the danger of a curtain of poverty dividing the world, with the same dire consequences as the Iron Curtain had on world peace and security. That danger remains and has become more pronounced.

Last week the President of the United States reminded this Assembly that "the gulf is widening between the world's haves and have-nots". (*A/53/PV.7, p. 11*) Narrowing that gulf is essential if we desire a secure global society bereft of rage. That rage often transforms itself into acts of violence.

The ill winds that blow at present, devastating the economies of many States and crippling progress built through the hard work of so any families around the world, further aggravate this situation.

The United Nations is the unique instrument to promote and protect the universal enjoyment of human dignity. Significantly, one of the first tasks that this Organization set itself was the drafting of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of its adoption by this Assembly, we renew our commitment to its content. That document is not outdated, nor can it be easily replaced. It proclaims human rights that by their very nature are universal, inherent and indivisible.

The Declaration is comprehensive and demands an observance that is equally comprehensive. A selective approach damages the Declaration and the wider concepts that it represents. It undermines a vision of society in which respect for human rights is paramount and universal.

There is, however, a significant lack in this Declaration. It is an instrument with no judicial mechanisms or sanctions. Has the time arrived to learn from the experience of the regional human rights conventions, in particular the European Convention, which through its mechanisms instituted the European Court of Human Rights and through the right of individual petition further guarantees a judicial process aimed at ensuring effective enforcement?

There can be no freedom without democracy. Equally, there can be no democracy without the exercise of individual freedoms. We underscore this reaffirmation as we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We the peoples look up to United Nations for leadership in resolving the ills of our times. Yet we the peoples are the United Nations. The United Nations is us.

Attempts to project or depict the United Nations as an entity alien to the rest of the international community or as an Organization that can determine or predetermine the fate of peoples and society are both erroneous and dangerous. This Organization depends on a continuation of that balance of principles and institutions intrinsic in the Charter. This balance is best conserved by consolidating the process of consensus-building that has rendered so many positive results in the past half-century. Imposition of the will of some over the will of the others is rarely conducive to harmony in any circumstance. It is even less so in a forum of sovereign nation States.

There are instances when the will of the majority traces important paths for future cooperation between States. Yet the effort to ensure the widest a priori adherence to the principles being negotiated is always essential, particularly if we desire such agreements to be universal in their application. This demands a diplomatic and political effort that may appear exasperating. Still, it is the path that best conserves the delicate balance between the sovereign rights of States and the emergence of a new world order.

We have partaken of the sorrow sown by violence and war. We have survived the tensions of bloc antagonism and nuclear proliferation. We have grappled with the anguish of division and mutual suspicion. The

imminence of a new millennium naturally generates hopes and expectations. Foremost is the longing for the fulfilment of the promise garnered at the end of the cold war. Throughout this decade we committed ourselves, devising tools to deal with uncertainties as they emerged. Yet suffering and strife continue to plague the planet.

Shocking violations imposed upon us the duty to provide future generations with an international judicial mechanism to fairly establish the guilt of the perpetrators of war crimes and provide for their punishment. We acted with the swiftness demanded by the might of right. We set the framework to deal with crimes that are an affront to humanity's sense of justice and compassion.

In Rome last July we adopted the Statute of the International Criminal Court. We thus lay the foundation for an effective and credible institution that in itself is a deterrent against the commission of heinous crimes falling under its jurisdiction. We hope that the momentum gathered in institution-building is retained to enable the Court to start functioning and effectively deal with crimes against humanity whenever they occur.

Vigilance remains the order of the day. With good reason, the world proclaimed victory at the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The ratification of the latter by two of the nuclear-weapon States is a welcome and positive step. Yet pitted against these positive developments were recent nuclear tests carried out by two non-signatories. We have seen the partial dismantling of nuclear arsenals, but also witnessed the dangers of proliferation. Such actions fuel insecurity and mistrust. We join others in strongly urging these two countries, and indeed all countries, to exercise restraint. Nuclear testing is a stark reminder of the dangers ever present in nuclear weaponry.

Malta welcomes the statements of intent made by the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan in this Assembly last week. They augur well for the universality of the NPT regime. No effort must be spared to ensure universal adherence to and compliance with the relevant treaties covering not only nuclear weapons but also all weapons of mass destruction. The nuclear disarmament agenda must be kept on track. The dangers that loom are not limited to the possession and use of such armaments by nuclear-weapon States. The spectre of nuclear terrorism haunts us as we combat illegal trafficking related to the possession, production and use of such weapons.

The dangers remain multiple. Chemical and biological weapons pose destabilizing threats. By disturbing contrast, technologies for their acquisition and use are relatively easy to develop. Conventional arms-trafficking also remains a major menace.

The establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) sets out a regime of control and verification that strikes a balance, curbing proliferation of chemicals for weapons use while sanctioning beneficial use of chemicals by a wide range of industries. Malta is proud to have served on the Executive Council in its initial stage.

It is our hope that the verification protocol on biological weapons may likewise hamper, discourage and disallow the use of biological components for war, conflict or conquest. Images of the maimed victims of landmines buttress our commitment to outlaw these weapons. Malta was among the first to sign the Ottawa Convention, and ratification is being processed. We join others in saluting its entry into force early next year. This brings closer the prohibition on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and their destruction.

Equally threatening, intrusive and destabilizing are international crime, drug-trafficking and terrorism. These continue to poison the very roots of our societies, spreading corruption, fear and suffering. No Government can ignore or shield itself from such phenomena. Complacency is both dangerous and unreal. United Nations efforts to further international cooperation to combat and curb these afflictions, particularly those of the Vienna Centre for International Crime Prevention, deserve our full and unwavering support.

Freedom, democracy and social justice have fortunately become oft-used terms within this Organization. They are indeed the basic elements of all our efforts. They reflect the will to give substance to the Charter's reaffirmation of fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of the human person, and the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.

Commitment to human rights must be matched by action to promote social justice and better living standards in larger freedom. The human rights that we promote and protect must be complemented by the provision of a social safety net that preserves the dignity of all. This is a principle that the Maltese people hold dear.

My Government was again returned to office less than three weeks ago. The cornerstone of our agenda is the restoration of confidence and direction and the generation of wealth, to the benefit of all our people: our only and most precious resource. This demands the resumption of a strategy that invests in improving health and education services with the same vigour with which we revolutionized the social and economic infrastructures of our country. We are committed to social justice and thus to the well-being of those most vulnerable to suffering if left to their own devices in times of economic transition. The true measure of progress remains social justice that buttresses equity and personal dignity and ensures the universal enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms.

The change in Administration has also brought about the resumption of the march towards Europe which was briefly frozen during the previous 22 months by the previous Administration. Malta's application for membership of the European Union has been reactivated. An overwhelming electoral mandate reconfirms the European vocation of our people, repeatedly expressed in free and fair elections during the past two decades. The choice of our people is clear, and the path we shall follow is equally clear. Our immediate objective is to rejoin those countries earmarked for the next enlargement of the Union. Though much remains to be done, the commitment of the people and the Government is deep-seated.

We do not choose to be European. We are European: European in history and culture, in economic structures and political organization, in security concerns and ethical values. Anchorage in the European Union is the natural culmination of our development process, our traditions and our culture. As in any other member of the Union, debate on the benefits of membership and the consequent rights and responsibilities continues. This is an intrinsic aspect of the democratic process. Nowhere in Europe have choices been easy or straightforward, but everywhere in Europe, the freely expressed will of the people has prevailed. This is a fundamental characteristic of Europe, a political union built on respect for the individual and the democratic will of its peoples.

Enlargement of the European Union to gather peoples and nations within its fold in a spirit of pluralism, solidarity and cooperation is more than just a process. It cannot be seen as just an exercise in augmenting the membership. It is much more than that. It is a political demand for the realization of the Union and its credibility in global politics. Characterized by reciprocity, it is a quest in peace-building, a venture that in less than half a century has continued to transform the founding fathers' ideal into a tangible reality.

Like all other Mediterranean States, Malta views the problems of its region with particular concern. At the crossroads of cultures and civilizations, the Mediterranean is disproportionately burdened with turmoil, tension and conflict. Resolution of each crisis demands positive action by the protagonists directly responsible. Yet the world community can contribute, through its efforts and good offices, to constructing an environment conducive to negotiated settlement. The bitter heritage of the past sometimes impedes that contact which is an essential first step in the setting up of negotiating structures. In this effort to overcome obstacles, the international community and individual statesmen have given their fair share.

The open wounds that still afflict the region demand renewed engagement lest they continue to fester and degenerate into volatility that would risk spilling over to broader areas.

The Cyprus question has long been one of these open wounds, having political and stability repercussions that go beyond the geographic dimensions of the island itself. A solution in conformity with the resolutions of the United Nations can have enduring positive effects for all the parties concerned in the dispute.

The ever pervasive problems encountered by the Middle East process are of particular concern. In spite of various efforts, this process has come to a virtual standstill. We believe in the importance of revitalizing and respecting the commitments undertaken through and after the Oslo peace accords. We urge all sides to respond positively to current initiatives aimed at restoring dialogue and hope.

The new millennium is the commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ, when the message that was brought to us was "peace on Earth". This is precisely the message that is central to the initiative that will be debated during this session, Bethlehem 2000. How sad it will be if the land of the nativity is still at war 2,000 years after that message.

The Euro-Mediterranean process was a significant step in bringing together European and Mediterranean countries comprehensively to address issues that still beleaguer the region. The impasse in the Middle East has dealt a blow to the Euro-Mediterranean process. One

hopes that this is but a temporary setback. Stability in the Mediterranean must rest on multiple initiatives that nurture cooperation through gradual confidence- and security-building measures. This is the crux of our insistence on the need to establish a stability pact for the region. Initiatives such as the addition of a parliamentary dimension to this process of dialogue, promoted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the setting up of a council or forum of Mediterranean States and the eventual creation of a conference on security and cooperation in the Mediterranean deserve serious consideration.

Regional approaches complement and reinforce efforts at the international level. In 1992, at the Helsinki follow-up meeting of the then Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), Malta proposed that the CSCE should declare itself a regional arrangement by the terms of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. We note with satisfaction that relations between what is now known as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations continue to be strengthened. Apart from institutional benefits reaped through regular contact between the two organizations, what is more relevant is the increased cooperation on the ground in the various parts of the OSCE area.

Ever since Dipoli, the site of the first preparatory phase, Malta has contributed to the evolution of the OSCE process. It has promoted the Mediterranean dimension of this process. Mediterranean and European security remain intimately and reciprocally linked. Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean is an important element for stability in the OSCE region. Consistent engagement by successive Malta Governments has contributed towards the greater involvement of the Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation in the work of the OSCE. We will continue to work to further this relationship.

The regional approach has reinforced cooperation through the interlocking of different and distinct European and international organizations. In this respect, Malta pays homage to the role of the Council of Europe in protecting and promoting dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms and in nurturing the principles of human solidarity.

We are particularly heartened by the Secretary-General's stated intention to consolidate the partnership between regional organizations and the United Nations through a more structured, rational and cost-effective division of labour.

Distinct from other organizations, the Commonwealth also continues to advance avenues of cooperation. Cross-regional projects among countries steeped in a common tradition continue to unfold. Malta upholds this international effort through its participation in various programmes that promote sustainable development.

Different scenarios face this Organization. We have learnt that negotiating agreements is not enough. Universality remains a priority as we develop the tools to deal with emerging problems. Reform of this Organization is another priority. Many of its structures must better their effectiveness. Reform is not an end in itself — it is an ongoing process that necessarily requires periodic review. We must remain open to the challenge of change by being innovative and adaptive, seeking to reorient structures established in a different time, without betraying the core principles that remain ever valid.

Malta has steadfastly fostered awareness of the need to revitalize the General Assembly. With its universal, democratic character, this Assembly is the ultimate expression of the principle of the sovereign equality of States. Yet, conditioned by the past, the Assembly has not fully realized its potential. As the international consensus-building forum, its role can be further strengthened, thus enhancing its authority.

Progress has been registered in deliberations on Security Council reform, but consensus still evades us. The question of which categories of membership to expand dominates the discussion and attracts attention. However, other important issues, such as the transparency and openness of the Council, continue to develop. Malta attaches great importance to this aspect, which benefits the widest majority of States.

Security Council decisions legally bind all Member States. Thus, procedures enhancing consultations between Council and Assembly members are of immense value. Improved methods introduced in recent years, while nurturing the symbiotic relationship that should bond Council and Assembly, prove that conferring does not hinder the Council's ability to intervene with the required swiftness.

In seeking solutions, even on what type of expansion the Security Council should undergo, the need for general agreement must be underscored. General agreement is not to be seen in quantitative terms; rather, it should be viewed as a guarantee that solutions have the political

support to come to fruition. Agreement on this sensitive issue must be comprehensive if it is to stand the test of time. Lack of consensus on expanding the permanent member category should not impede further progress.

We support the fallback position of the Non-Aligned Movement to limit enlargement to the non-permanent category for the time being. This will allow the process to move forward without prejudice to an eventual continuation of deliberations on permanent category expansion.

The environment has been the focus of uninterrupted attention since the end of the cold war. The ushering in of a new era of cooperation has enabled the international community to address different areas requiring concerted action. An unprecedented number of treaties and conventions have been negotiated. Treaty bodies and institutions now function effectively, addressing distinct but related areas of concern.

In this new international milieu, the Charter's broader notion of trusteeship assumes renewed relevance. During my presidency of this Assembly, the Trusteeship Council was about to discharge its responsibility for the last of the territories placed under its custody. Some suggested freezing or dismantling the Council. I proposed that the Trusteeship Council be given additional responsibility in coordinating international endeavours that safeguard different areas of the common heritage of humankind.

Since then, many others have proclaimed themselves favourable to this type of reform. The identification of new additional responsibilities for the Trusteeship Council forms part of the reform package proposed by the Secretary-General last year.

We have also taken note of the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements in its report to the Secretary-General earlier this year. The positive openness to this proposal is encouraging. Malta intends to participate actively in the recommended consultations to be undertaken by the Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in preparing for the next regular session of the Governing Council.

The application of the principles of trust and common responsibility in a number of international conventions makes their coordination the natural task of the Trusteeship Council. The principle of trust should retain its rightful place in the institutional framework of this Organization.

The International Year of the Ocean is in its final quarter. Many feel that a forum is needed to consider the closely interrelated problems of ocean space as a whole. The Independent World Commission for the Oceans, on which I have the honour to serve, has vigorously addressed this vital issue. Malta suggests positive consideration of the suggestion that this Assembly institute a biennial committee of the whole to review ocean-related questions in an integrated manner.

Notwithstanding our collective endeavours, peace remains daily threatened in different parts of the world. United Nations deliberations in response to such threats rightfully enjoy a high profile with the public and in the media. In most instances, the success of these deliberations rests on the sheer dedication of the United Nations officials in conflict zones and particularly on the courageous sacrifice of troops forming part of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

This year, we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Peacekeepers have faced risks, humiliation, threat and death. This notwithstanding, they have never faltered in their duty or determination to bring hope where despair often prevails. Despite increasing risks, the United Nations has not shirked its responsibilities. Indeed, it has broadened its peacekeeping mandates. I had the opportunity to personally bring this Assembly's message of solidarity and support to peacekeepers serving in different parts of the world. During the past five decades, the number of peacekeepers who have paid the supreme sacrifice has continued to grow. We salute and pay tribute to their memory.

Like others who have addressed this Assembly before me, I have outlined some challenges facing our Organization. New problems continue to emerge, presenting us with daunting and confounding scenarios. Yet, despite all the odds against it, the United Nations has withstood the test of time. It has survived because it invested faith in humankind and dispensed hope where misery prevailed. It has gradually built the required tools to foster international cooperation.

Obstacles may continue to loom large, yet at no time in human history has the potential been so great. We must seize the opportunity provided us to act in concert. Our commitment to the United Nations is unwavering. Our commitment to sparing humankind from untold suffering is strong. Together, we can head into the new millennium imbued with the founding fathers'

determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. We owe this to ourselves. We will strive to bequeath it to our children.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Togo, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kokou Koffigoh.

Mr. Koffigoh (Togo) (*interpretation from French*): Allow me first of all, on behalf of the people of Togo and President Eyadema and his Government, to join in the congratulations extended to you, Sir, since the beginning of our work on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session.

We would also like to congratulate his your illustrious predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, on the effective manner in which he conducted the work of the fifty-second session.

I would furthermore like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his colleagues for their continuous efforts to champion the noble ideals of peace, justice, progress and solidarity embodied by the United Nations.

By way of analysing the situation in Africa, I would like to present Togo's perspective of the world's problems in the context of improved international cooperation.

Africa is democratizing, but it needs peace and security if it is to succeed. Africa is the continent most affected by the great scourges of the planet, but its development is also part of a dynamic of progress. The scourges hampering its development are well known: endemic disease, drought, poverty, political instability, ethnic conflicts, civil wars and regional conflicts. These scourges have a tendency to eclipse the successes.

Since the signing of the Abuja Treaty in 1991, Africa has set itself a timetable for integration in the framework of the African Economic Community, on the basis of strengthening regional groupings of western, northern, central, eastern and southern Africa. These groups are themselves actively engaged in seeking joint solutions to the challenges confronting its member States.

The rate of economic growth of certain African States continues to make progress thanks to good management policies.

A vast democratic movement has begun throughout our continent to build States based on the rule of law. This movement is being followed up by the adoption of new constitutions and the establishment of independent bodies to implement them. Numerous heads of State and of Government have had their mandates challenged in periodic elections. The majority and the opposition representatives of the people have seats in the new representative bodies — parliaments and national assemblies. The success of the functioning of these new constitutional bodies is ensured by independent legal bodies. The press is now free, as are labour unions in most of our States.

I am emphasizing these institutional aspects of building a new Africa because the respect and support of the international community for these institutions is a factor in favour of peace within the particular States, and therefore for peace in our regions.

Experience has shown us that a domestic conflict, by giving rise to an exodus of people to neighbouring countries, also has a rapid and serious effect on the latter. I repeat, as the current situation in the Great Lakes region demonstrates, such domestic conflicts can lead to regional crises.

Togo is among the States that voluntarily established institutions that safeguard the rule of law and that can arbitrate disputes that may arise in the new context of democratization. It is in this framework that the Constitutional Court of Togo declared the results of the presidential election of 21 June 1998 after having arbitrated the disputes that resulted from the election.

Togo's respect for institutions is the very foundation of democracy and peace. On behalf of my Government, I would like to invite all of our partners at the United Nations to support without distinction the efforts of all the countries of Africa that commit themselves to the difficult but rewarding path of building a State of law. This is the price of peace in Africa.

While we can be gratified at the end of certain conflicts — particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leone — and while solutions are in sight to relieve the tensions in Guinea-Bissau, we cannot fail to express our concern over the crisis in the Great Lakes region, the resumption of hostilities in Angola, the continuation of the crisis in Somalia and, finally, the armed confrontation between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

We cannot stress enough the advantages of dialogue and negotiation as the best paths to follow for settling disputes between States on the basis of respect for their territorial integrity.

In that connection, the international community must put an end to the embargo imposed on Libya by implementing the jurisdictional solution accepted by that country and by ensuring a fair trial for the suspects in the Lockerbie bombing. Togo firmly supports the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to settle this dispute and end the suffering of the Libyan people.

My country takes this opportunity to repeat its steadfast condemnation of terrorism in all of its forms and to emphasize the need for urgent and concerted action to combat this scourge effectively.

As we are aware, the proliferation of conflict situations in Africa remains a real cause of concern for the international community. I would like to note in this regard the important report (A/52/871) presented by the Secretary-General last February at the request of the Security Council on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. That report contains specific recommendations on means of preventing such conflicts and putting an end to them, as well as on measures to be taken to create conditions for lasting peace and economic growth. We hope that the implementation of his recommendations by the Security Council, by the relevant bodies of the United Nations system and by the Bretton Woods institutions will result in the effective prevention of conflicts and put Africa on the road to progress, stability and sustainable development.

Elsewhere in the world, we were relieved to see the signing of an agreement between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations, which made it possible at the last moment to avoid a new confrontation in the Gulf.

In the same region, my Government deplores the present deadlock in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. We remain convinced that only the resumption of direct negotiations between the principals will make it possible to usher in an era of peace, security and prosperity in that region. We were relieved to see the contacts that have taken place between Mr. Yasser Arafat and Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu through the mediation of the American Government. Togo strongly supports this initiative.

With regard to the other crises that assail the world and jeopardize the lives of so many millions of people — particularly in Afghanistan and Kosovo — my country hopes that through firm political will backed by candid and sincere negotiations, the parties to the conflicts will find appropriate solutions that are acceptable to all.

The world's concerns at the dawn of the third millennium are not linked solely to the effects of the phenomenon of globalization. The preservation of peace, security and stability for States and peoples continues to be an important priority. In that context, Togo is gratified to note that the United Nations is continuing to discharge its mission of peacemaking and peacekeeping. In this regard, I welcome the upcoming commemoration on 6 October of 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping operations, and I would like to pay tribute to the memory of all the men and women who have given their lives in the service of the Organization.

My country, which firmly supports the ongoing quest for peace and security for all, would like to emphasize the need to strengthen cooperation in this area, in a spirit of complementarity, between the United Nations and subregional and regional organizations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The appropriate regional machinery necessary to give concrete form to this shared desire for collective maintenance of peace and security should be established.

It is in that spirit that Togo — together with other countries of the West African subregion and in the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) — is working to establish a viable and permanent mechanism for the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts and the maintenance of peace. It is also within this framework that we welcome the fourth extraordinary summit of ECOWAS, held in Lomé from 16 to 17 December 1997, and the holding of the joint military manoeuvres named "Cohesion Kompienga '98", held from 16 to 21 April 1998, in which the armed forces of Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, the Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Togo participated.

Among the goals of the United Nations are vigilance over the maintenance of peace and security, the establishment of conditions for harmonious economic development to ensure the well-being of our populations and working for a just world in which the rights of individuals and peoples are not only recognized and consecrated, but above all respected.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to hail the holding of the United Nation Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, which led to the adoption of the Statute of the court which was held in Rome from 15 June to 17 July.

Togo believes that peace is impossible without justice. The struggle for peace and the struggle for greater justice must be viewed as two complementary aspects of one and the same struggle for the realization of the deepest aspirations of all the peoples of the world. The positive outcome of the negotiations at the Conference resulted in the adoption of the Statute of the court, illustrating anew the vigour and ability of our Organization in dealing with the present and preparing States to face the issues of tomorrow.

It is for that reason that my delegation favours all efforts to reform the Organization that aim to make it more effective, more concerned with the problems of mankind and more democratic, so that the views of all are better reflected and taken into account in all of its bodies.

Togo would therefore like to see the rapid conclusion of discussions to allow for the permanent representation of Africa in the Security Council, in accordance with the resolutions of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The democracy we are advocating at the national level must also be reflected in international organizations.

The United Nations has always played an important role in the advancement of economic and social development and, when necessary, in providing the men, women and children of the entire world with the assistance on which their survival often depends. We are nevertheless obliged to recognize that despite the efforts made, the improvement of standards of living, full employment and the conditions for progress and economic and social development have not been realized. This is particularly the case in Africa, where continued inequality and poverty, among other things, dangerously imperil the stability of States.

It is true that African economies have performed remarkably well in the last three years; but it is also true that the consolidation of these gains still depends on the international economic environment. Global economic structural constraints — including the continuing burden of debt, the reduction in the flow of official development assistance, currency fluctuations, the inequality of investment flows, weak commodity prices and market protectionism practised by developed countries — still remain the major obstacles to the economic development of African countries.

With regard to the debt burden in particular, my country highly values the declaration of the eighth consultative meeting of the Organization of African Unity, the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa, which was held in Abidjan in January 1998. We believe that the efforts to alleviate the debt burden must be continued in conjunction with Africa's partners in order to find appropriate solutions to this thorny problem.

In this context, Togo would like to reaffirm the imperative need to hold an international conference on Africa's foreign debt, and it requests the support of the international community to translate that proposal into reality.

Regrettably, at this time of economic globalization, the marginalization of Africa in terms of international trade is accelerating, even though today the development of trade appears to be the most effective means of managing the resources necessary for self-sufficiency. Indeed, the development and economic growth of African States requires as a basic condition sufficient currency inflows from the export of their commodities. Thus, in the view of my delegation, an open world system operating under just and equitable regulations should be established in order to ensure the active participation of African States in international trade. To that end, more liberal measures will be required in order to promote the transformation and diversification of their products as well as to attract and channel investments towards them.

The industrialized countries are attempting to join forces. This shows clearly that today no country, regardless of how powerful it is, can alone provide for its own economic growth and cope with increasingly aggressive international competition. Given this state of affairs, the African countries have in recent years reaffirmed their will to pool their potential by establishing and strengthening subregional units. It is clear that the development policy of our countries must be considered within this framework, for this is the only way that Africa can become a fully fledged and reliable partner in the world of the twenty-first century.

In this respect, the entry into force of the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community serves as

a good illustration of the will of African States to unite their efforts to ensure their own progress.

Togo, which is firmly committed to the policy of economic integration of the continent, wishes to take this opportunity to once again urge the international community to support the efforts of the African countries to achieve the goals of sustainable development which alone can promote prosperity and the well-being of their peoples.

I should like here to underscore an emerging trend in Africa: inter-African parliamentary control of the activities of our regional and subregional organizations. It is in this framework that an inter-parliamentary committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union was created recently in Bamako; its work is already under way. Also in this framework, a parliamentary assembly was established in the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), in southern Africa. This shows that while, generally speaking, people tend to despair of the future of Africa, we young Africans have faith that Africa is on the right path as long as we have the unswerving support of the international community.

Here I should like once again to welcome the commitment of the Japanese Government to Africa through the Tokyo Conference on the Development of Africa (TICAD), aimed at seeking solutions to the continent's development problems. My delegation would like here once again to thank the Japanese Government for all of its efforts to strengthen cooperation between Africa and Asia, and congratulates it on the convening of TICAD II next October in Tokyo.

Moreover, Togo believes that the combination of TICAD with other initiatives — in particular that of the United States on equitable partnership, known as 20/20 Vision; that of the European Union, within the framework of the Lomé Convention; and that of the francophone world, within the framework of the Hanoi Plan of Action — will help safeguard and consolidate the spirit of solidarity, which Africa wishes to see ever more active and ever more purposeful.

My country is convinced of the need for solidarity among the Members of our Organization and is deeply committed to the noble ideals of peace, freedom and justice and of economic, social and cultural progress, which the United Nations has contributed to advancing. During this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Togo fervently hopes to witness the realization, for the benefit of all humankind, of the profound aspirations of peoples to greater freedom and to a world of peace in which the struggle against poverty, famine and illness grows is daily strengthened.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Farouk Al-Shara, on whom I now call.

Mr. Al-Shara (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have the pleasure of congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your wide-ranging expertise in international affairs will facilitate your task and lead the deliberations of this session to a successful conclusion. I should like also to thank your predecessor, Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, for his wise leadership and invaluable contributions during the preceding session of the Assembly. Nor can I fail to express our thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General of our Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the efforts he is exerting to enhance the role of the United Nations in international affairs.

Following the end of the cold war a decade ago, many, especially in the countries of the North, believed that this planet, which is home to approximately 6 billion people, was going to become a more stable, secure and prosperous world. That conviction proceeded from the notion that the bi-polar system was unable to achieve international security except in the framework of a balance of terror. Nor was the old system able to resolve regional conflicts due to competition for areas of influence.

The question now before the international community is the following: were these convictions justified? Or did wishful thinking leapfrog reality, ignoring the following salient facts?

First, nuclear weapons, which are unparalleled in their destructive capability, have proliferated since the end of the cold war and have now reached India and Pakistan. This proliferation has also gained a sort of legitimacy based on the fact that Israel's possession of nuclear weapons was not spoken of during the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. My country, Syria, Arab countries and most countries in the Non-Aligned Movement appealed to the five nuclear-weapon States during the review and extension

conferences for this Treaty not to exempt any country from adhering to this Treaty, so that the world will not face a new nuclear arms race. Unfortunately that urgent call fell on deaf ears. Those who now assume that nuclear-arms proliferation will be limited to a few countries are mistaken. Syria and all Arab countries call for turning the Middle East into a nuclear-weapon-free zone, as a serious contribution to halting the nuclear-arms race.

Secondly, in the post-cold-war era regional conflicts have multiplied, becoming more fierce, and with varying forms and motives. This has happened to such an extent that the United States, which is now the only super-Power in a unipolar world, and the Security Council, the body responsible for maintaining international peace and security, are no longer able to contain these conflicts, let alone find just solutions to them. Anyone who reads the statement issued by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the five permanent members of the Security Council, issued at the beginning of this session of the General Assembly, will have a headache and will be severely frustrated at seeing this world face so many regional conflicts and so many complicated crises without any light at the end of the tunnel.

Thirdly, we have the recent economic and financial crises in the world, particularly following the collapse of financial markets in South-East Asia and the accompanying sharp decline in the prices of raw materials, especially oil. All of this has proven that economic globalization is a two-edged sword and has repercussions which cannot be confined to those countries tantalized by rapid prosperity generated by an inflow of capital and foreign investments. Rather, such effects go beyond those countries to the countries exporting capital and investments, which were also tempted by quick profits without paying much heed to the consequences.

What is going on in the world now under the banner of globalization is a cause for concern, because it gives priority to profit over other development factors: economic, social, cultural and environmental. It also strives to confine the role of the State to providing guarantees and protection to major market forces, ignoring the responsibility for the achievement of social justice for the peoples. Furthermore, the continuing marginalization of developing countries in international economic decision-making and the continuing severe restrictions on access by such countries to international markets and financial and technological resources render these countries unable to benefit from the promised opportunities of globalization.

Strengthening development indicators and increasing levels of productivity are the more durable means of limiting the effects of economic crises and reducing the effects of financial upheavals, especially in developing countries. At any rate, we believe that such crises and shake-ups may happen from time to time and may touch every country, no matter how immune it may seem, so long as the most powerful and prevalent monetary unit in the world — the United States dollar — is not stable. However, the imminent issuance of a European monetary unit may contribute to establishing a more stable international financial and economic system.

In any case, we believe there is no alternative to opening a serious dialogue within the framework of the United Nations between developing and developed countries and international monetary institutions in order to lay a solid foundation for international cooperation which might save the world from economic surprises and social upheavals and also contribute positively to the interests of all countries in the world, in the South as well as the North.

Since its beginning, the Arab-Israeli conflict has been given high priority on the agenda of the international community. International efforts to contain this conflict have been unrelenting every time it has exploded, because the Middle East, with its singular strategic position, its tremendous material and spiritual wealth and its renowned cultural heritage can be considered the most sensitive parameter for measuring the state of world peace and security.

The peace process that was launched in Madrid was seen as a new beginning to settle this conflict with the end of the cold war. The Madrid terms of reference, the American assurances and the results reached constituted a firm basis which cannot be ignored under any circumstance.

The insistence of the Israeli Prime Minister on pursuing a policy hostile to peace and his rejection of the rights of the Arabs to regain the occupied territories under the pretext of security for Israel alone — at a time when Israel's military arsenal is considered one of the mightiest and most modern in the world — constitute a challenge not only to the Arabs, but also to the will of the international community as a whole.

It seems clear that Israel does not limit its conception of security to the Arab territories it occupies; rather it is working to establish a military alliance in the

region which will undermine the peace process and put the region on a path fraught with dangers, tension and the potential for explosion.

What the region and its peoples need is not the establishment of alliances and axes but the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace, based on the full withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and from the south of Lebanon and its western Bekaa, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and the land-for-peace principle. In addition, the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people must be safeguarded, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of their independent State on their national territory.

The peace process faces a real crisis. It has been in a stalemate on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks for over two years. It faces erosion on the Palestinian track, as well, due to Israeli intransigence. The entire peace process is on the wane and will be so long as the Israeli Government rejects the principle of land for peace and attempts to impose on the Arabs a peace based on occupation and settlerism. However, Syria has been and continues to be committed to peace; we consider it a strategic option that requires the resumption of negotiations from the point at which they stopped on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks and that continues to build on the commitments and undertakings reached until a just and comprehensive peace is established in the region.

Syria stresses its concern for the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq and calls for alleviating the suffering of our brotherly Iraqi people and lifting the sanctions imposed on them according to a specific timetable. In the meantime, Iraq is called upon to implement the remaining Security Council resolutions in a way that guarantees a just resolution to the issue of Kuwaiti prisoners of war.

Syria also calls for an end to the sanctions imposed on Libya, for it is our belief that it is possible to address this crisis in an appropriate legal framework, separate from any political motivation. We fully support the Libyan demand for a solution to this problem on a just basis.

Syria stands against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; we condemn it on all fronts. We differentiate between terrorism and the legitimate struggle of peoples against foreign occupation and for self-determination and national liberation, which cannot be considered terrorism. We also condemn killing innocent civilians everywhere, just as we condemn the State terrorism exercised by Israel against the Arabs.

We believe that resorting to force and violence in international relations, in contravention of the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law, does not promote international legitimacy but leaves the door wide open to the law of the jungle. In this regard, Syria finds the United States attack on the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical facility in Sudan to be unjustified. We believe that this attack constitutes a violation of the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. From this perspective, Syria supports the request of the Sudanese Government to the Security Council to send a fact-finding mission to investigate the American allegations relating to that installation.

Mr. Mra (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Syria follows with great concern the sharp conflicts sweeping some African countries. While expressing its solidarity and support to the peoples of Africa, Syria calls on the international community to make the necessary efforts in close cooperation with the Organization of African Unity to find solutions to these conflicts in a manner that consolidates peace, stability and security on the African continent. The international community is also called upon to give all types of support to enable African States to eliminate the scourge of poverty and free themselves of the burden of debt in order to achieve sustainable development.

We are also following with great concern the situation in the Republic of Somalia. We urge all the Somali parties to respect their undertakings and implement the agreements reached among them. We call on them to put the national interests of Somalia above all other considerations and to cooperate with Arab, African and international efforts towards the realization of national reconciliation so as to guarantee the return of security and stability for the Somali people.

Syria supports the measures taken to ensure the achievement of peace and security in the Korean peninsula, and we also support the Korean people's aspirations to achieve unity.

Syria stresses anew the urgent need to take all necessary steps, as promptly as possible, to end the economic, commercial and financial sanctions imposed by the United States against Cuba for more than three

decades now. We second Cuba's call for the resolution of differences between the two countries through dialogue, on the basis of equality, mutual respect and good-neighbourly relations.

Syria is extremely concerned about the general situation in Afghanistan and the continuing bloodshed. Syria strongly condemns the killing of the Iranian diplomats in Mazar-i-Sharif. This was a violation of the principles of international law and of the tolerant values of Islam. We call upon all parties to exercise self-restraint and to work towards reaching a peaceful solution and national reconciliation.

Syria supports the stand of the Non-Aligned Movement which considers the reform of the Security Council, its democratization and the expansion of its membership as part and parcel of a package deal that is not subject to a specific timetable. We emphasize the principles of equal sovereignty among States and equitable geographical representation according to the provisions of the Charter. Syria also believes that the exercise of the right of veto should be reduced and that its scope should be limited.

We support the position of the Non-Aligned Movement concerning the concept of general agreement, specifically that such agreement should, in conformity with the provisions of Article 108 of the Charter, require a majority of two thirds of Member States.

The Secretary-General's proposed plan for reform was a positive step to improve the Organization's efficiency and enable it to cope with the changes required in the next stage. The Syrian delegation participated in the discussions relevant to reforming the United Nations in the spirit of collective responsibility of Member States to enhance the role of this international Organization. We believe that Member States do have a major role to play in consultations concerning the reforms and in the resulting resolutions.

The fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is an important occasion for re-emphasizing the fact that all human rights are universal and interrelated and that the international community should address human rights in a just and comprehensive manner, free of double standards and manipulations for political purposes or to interfere in the internal affairs of States, and taking into account the national characteristics and the historical, cultural and religious elements of each people and nation.

Humankind continues to aspire to a world free of wars, poverty, ignorance and injustice, a world in which justice, security, stability and sustainable development prevail. Peoples of the world have pinned their hopes on the United Nations Charter, which specifies among its purposes the importance of maintaining world peace and security, developing relations among nations based on respect for equality and self-determination of peoples, achieving international cooperation in the economic, social and cultural fields and enhancing basic freedoms for mankind everywhere.

Let us work together seriously and confidently on the basis of these principles and objectives. Let us not disappoint future generations. This is not an easy task, but it is certainly a noble one, which deserves our efforts, sacrifice, patience and wisdom.

The Acting President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Mr. Tofik Zulfugarov.

Mr. Zulfugarov (Azerbaijan) (*interpretation from Russian*): Allow me first of all to sincerely congratulate the President on his unanimous election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, and to express confidence that under his efficient leadership the Assembly will cope successfully with the complex issues before it.

I would like to express our special gratitude to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, whose vast experience and great professionalism greatly contributed to the success of the previous session, and whose work as President during the fifty-second session epitomized the United Nations commitment to the process of transformation aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the Organization.

All aspects of life in Azerbaijan are covered by the process of radical reform directed at creating a democratic, secular society governed by the rule of law and based on a market economy. In spite of the current objective difficulties caused by the consequences of armed conflict and the problems inherent in the transitional period, Azerbaijan does not see any alternative to the course of democratic transformation it has taken, and considers the strengthening of its democratic institutions a priority of its State policy.

Respect for fundamental political and civil rights and freedoms, the functioning of the multi-party system, the protection of the interests of each citizen in our society

irrespective of ethnic origin, independence of the judiciary, as well as the advancement of other elements of democratic society, are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan, which was adopted on 12 November 1995 in a national referendum. A great deal has been done to bring the legislative system of the country in line with relevant international standards.

Presidential elections that are to take place in Azerbaijan on 11 October this year will constitute a milestone in the process of further strengthening the democratic foundation of the society. Actions already undertaken by the leadership of the country have laid the foundation for genuinely free and just elections. A new law on presidential elections in the Republic of Azerbaijan was thoroughly examined by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe and meets the most rigorous international standards in this field.

The election process will be observed by 300 international monitors from the OSCE, the Council of Europe and other international organizations, as well as from institutions of individual countries, such as the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs in the United States. The widest possible participation of national monitors has been provided for. The leadership of the country has declared its commitment to conducting free and just elections, considering it a significant event in the history of the Azerbaijan State.

Positive developments resulting from current reforms can also be observed in the country's economy. At the initial stage of its formation the young Azerbaijan State faced internal instability, lack of a progressive legislative basis for the market economy, disintegration of traditional economic and trade relations, economic recession and a huge budget deficit. These elements have created serious obstacles to economic development. Armed aggression by neighbouring Armenia has had the most negative impact on the situation in Azerbaijan. It has resulted in the occupation of one fifth of its territory, the emergence of about 1 million refugees and internally displaced persons and the continuance of the 10-year-old blockade of the Nakhichevan region of Azerbaijan by Armenia.

The course of building a democratic society based on a market economy, taken by the leadership of the country, has created the prerequisites for drastic economic reforms. Since 1995, the Government of Azerbaijan has been implementing a comprehensive programme of economic stabilization. Fiscal, monetary and credit policies have been streamlined and structural reforms to liberalize the economy have been completed. We have achieved macroeconomic stability, as well as stability of the national currency. In fact, inflation rates have practically been reduced to zero, and since 1996 steady growth in the gross domestic product has been restored. Internal stability achieved as a result of the leadership's consistent policy, as well as reforms implemented, have provided a favourable climate for investments in the country.

Today, Azerbaijan continues with the reform of its banking system and privatization of State-owned enterprises. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for their support to the stabilization programme in Azerbaijan and for financing the structural transformations in its economy. I would like to offer our assurances of the irreversibility of the course of economic reforms taken by our Government and to express the hope that these important financial institutions will increase their assistance to Azerbaijan.

In its economic policy, our country attaches the highest priority to its integration into the world economy. Situated at the junction of Eastern and Western civilization, and having been for centuries a link between Europe and Asia, Azerbaijan is implementing a systematic programme aimed at its smooth integration into the world economy, and attaches great importance to the development of fruitful and mutually beneficial regional cooperation based on mutual respect for the sovereignty and interests of all States, as well as on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries.

In this connection, the country's leadership regards as strategically important the concept of creating an East-West corridor, and in particular the development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transportation link. The Transport Corridor: Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) programme, established by the Commission of the European Union in 1993, is designed to promote the development of interconnected national and regional transportation infrastructures to enhance cooperation between countries in Europe, the Black Sea region, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea region and Asia. Implementation of this programme will provide reliable access to the trans-European and trans-Asian transportation systems for the landlocked countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. During the last five years close interaction between the States involved in the

programme and active support by the Commission of the European Union have contributed to substantial progress in modernization and construction of communications, the development of relevant laws and codes and the improvement of the customs and tariff policies of participant States.

The results of five years of work were reviewed at the International Conference on the Restoration of the Historic Silk Route, held at the capital of Azerbaijan, the city of Baku, on 7-8 September this year. That Conference brought together delegations from 32 countries, including nine heads of State, and representatives of 13 international organizations. The major outcome of the Conference was the signing of the Principal multilateral agreement on international transport for development of the corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia, which is an important institutional mechanism for promoting the development and regulation of international transportation, as well as for coordinating and harmonizing transportation policies and legal frameworks in this field of transportation. The Baku Conference has become a major cornerstone in terms of strengthening and enhancing cooperation aimed at the further development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transportation corridor in the interests of the economic progress of all the participating States.

The delegation of Azerbaijan is counting on the support of the other Member States for this programme. We are convinced that the restoration of the historic silk route and the involvement of other countries and regions in this project would provide a strong impetus to the process of rapprochement and reciprocal enrichment of our peoples, a strengthening of their independence and sovereignty, as well as the successful implementation in those States of democratic and market-oriented reforms.

Carrying out plans to deliver carbohydrate resources produced by Azerbaijan and other countries of the Caspian basin to world markets by means of multiple pipelines is an integral part of the East-West concept, which is of inestimable importance for strengthening the independence and security of sovereign States, as well as for their economic and other development. We expect international financial institutions and other investors to show due interest in these projects, which can rightly be called a bridge to the third millennium.

Unfortunately, however, we are obliged to admit that the model of the progressive development of sovereign States of the region proposed by Azerbaijan is not accepted by all. The position taken by Armenia in the region still remains a serious obstacle to this process.

The question of a settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which has lasted for more than 10 years now, is a key issue in Azerbaijan's foreign policy. Relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the decisions of the OSCE have made it possible to create a necessary normative legal basis for the settlement of this conflict. In this context, it is necessary in particular to stress the codifying role and universality of the principles contained in the Lisbon statement made by the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. These principles, namely, recognition of the territorial integrity of Armenia and Azerbaijan, a high level of autonomy for Nagorny Karabakh within the Azerbaijan State and the provision of security and safety for the entire population of Nagorny Karabakh, are fully in keeping with the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and are comprehensive in nature, which makes possible their application with an equal degree of effectiveness not only to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, but to all other regional conflicts as well.

A positive balance has recently been achieved. An institute of mediation has been created, comprising the Minsk Group of the OSCE and its Co-Chairmen. The parameters for the settlement process have been established, providing for the elimination of the consequences of the armed conflict and, on this basis, a resolution of the political problems. As a result of Azerbaijan's persistence, it was possible in October 1997 to find points of contiguity with Armenia's position, and real opportunities for progress have emerged. The subsequent internal political events in Armenia, however, and the resulting drastic revision of its attitudes led to a decline in the dynamism of the Minsk process.

A just and lasting settlement cannot be achieved by Armenia's military pressure on Azerbaijan, by its continuing occupation of parts of the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan and by increasing its military potential there, by putting forward preconditions for the resumption of negotiations on the basis of the results of Armenia's aggression, or by imposing new procedural frameworks on the negotiations process, in order to perpetuate the situation resulting from the conflict.

Illegal transfers of arms from Russia to Armenia, worth more than $1 billion, and regular joint military exercises of those countries designed to increase the offensive potential of the Armenia's armed forces not

only prevent a facilitation of the settlement, but also have a direct destabilizing impact on the situation in the region.

Azerbaijan once again states its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict and the strict implementation of the ceasefire regime, until an agreement on the settlement of the armed conflict is reached, in the hopes that the same approach will be taken by the Armenian side. Azerbaijan calls on Armenia to accept the proposals of the Co-Chairmen of the Minsk Conference as a basis for negotiations within the format of the Minsk Group. Today, as never before, it is important for the international community to preserve its consistency, determination and persistence in upholding its declared position on the settlement of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Nobody should be in any doubt that progressive development of the States of the region can only be achieved through the establishment of just and lasting peace and stability in the southern Caucasian region on the basis of respect for sovereignty and the territorial integrity of its States. Azerbaijan believes that international organizations, as well as the entire international community, should more actively utilize their potential to further promote the peaceful negotiation process and the achievement of a political settlement to the conflict.

During its last session, in response to the recommendations of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly adopted important decisions aimed at reforming the Organization. Azerbaijan regards the work already done to this end as a solid basis for further adaptation of the Organization to the quickly changing needs and imperatives of today's world. We stand ready to further contribute to the implementation of these decisions intended to prepare the world Organization better to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Undoubtedly, in this regard, the reform of the Security Council is of special importance. In our view, it is expedient to adopt relevant decisions on this extremely sensitive issue on the basis of the broadest support of Member States and in accordance Article 108 of the Charter. Asia, Africa and Latin America should be represented in both categories of membership of the Security Council in a manner appropriate to current political realities. Given the fact that the number of countries in the Eastern European Group has doubled, we once again point out the need to allocate to that Group an additional non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

Addressing the question of the reform of the Security Council and the enhancement of the efficiency of its work, we cannot fail to draw attention to the fact that the four Security Council resolutions on the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan have still not been implemented.

We have repeatedly stressed that a review of the personnel policy of the United Nations should be an integral part of the Organization's reform. We remain extremely concerned by the fact that the Republic of Azerbaijan is still not represented in the Secretariat.

It is unfortunate that emergencies arising from military conflicts and acts of military aggression are still a pressing issue today. Millions of people continue to lose their homes, health and property, and are becoming internally displaced persons.

The people of my country have experienced the pain and misfortune of such a loss, having fallen victim to the Armenian aggression of which I have spoken. Every seventh citizen of Azerbaijan bears the burdens of the refugee's life, deprived of his home in his native land, suffering from heat in summer and cold in winter in temporary tent camps. In occupied Azerbaijani territory, hundreds of towns and villages have been destroyed, practically all of the houses, schools, hospitals and industrial facilities have been burned down or plundered and ancient cultural monuments have been razed. Coping with the refugee emergency and the restoration of what has been lost are two of the main concerns of the Azerbaijan State. These problems cannot be resolved until the occupying forces are withdrawn from Azerbaijani territory and all the refugees and displaced persons have been returned to the places from which they were expelled by force.

The Azerbaijan Government is doing a great deal to alleviate the situation. The role of the United Nations and its agencies in this process can scarcely be overestimated. In addition to providing direct humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons, at the present time a project is under way to restore a part of the Fisuli district, which was freed from the occupying Armenian units. This project is being carried out by the Government of Azerbaijan, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other agencies and organizations. However, the emerging trend of reduction in the volume of humanitarian assistance to Azerbaijan cannot fail to disturb us. While

expressing our most sincere gratitude to the United Nations, its specialized agencies and donor countries for their support and concrete assistance, we call on them not to decrease in the future the volume of their humanitarian aid to the people in Azerbaijan who are suffering from aggression and who live in the most unbearable conditions.

I should like to advantage of this opportunity to briefly refer to our cooperation with UNDP, which is playing a very positive role in the social, political and economic development of our country. Assistance from UNDP, the major source of subsidies necessary for carrying out development activities, is vital to resolve a number of serious problems in Azerbaijan that were mentioned earlier. We welcome the system of Resident Coordinators and highly commend the activity of the Resident Coordinator in Azerbaijan, designated by the Secretary-General, who is acting as the leader of the United Nations team in the country. At the same time, given the difficult financial constraints facing UNDP, I should like to call upon all Member States to increase their voluntary contributions to the budget of the Programme so that the recipient countries, including Azerbaijan, can more effectively use its potential to their advantage.

The consolidation of efforts of Member States with a view to launching a decisive attack against crime, drugs and terrorism continues to be a priority. Combating these phenomena can be successful only if all countries truly join forces. Azerbaijan, which has had to confront these real threats to its sovereignty and territorial integrity, in particular from Armenian terrorism, considers itself an active participant in the fight against these evils.

Azerbaijan welcomes the results of the Rome Diplomatic Conference to establish an International Criminal Court. We are convinced that an efficient, capable, independent and authoritative court will contribute to strengthening international cooperation for the effective prosecution and suppression of aggression, genocide and military crimes, which are the most heinous crimes constituting a threat to international peace and security. As a State that is experiencing all the sufferings and tragedy of aggression by Armenia, Azerbaijan is deeply interested in the establishment and effective functioning of international legal mechanisms for the prosecution of those responsible for the aforementioned crimes.

There are fewer than 500 days remaining until the end of this century, and we have no time to relax, no right to rest on our laurels. Approaching the end of the historic nineties, the United Nations, bringing together both the prosperous States and those who have overcome numerous calamities but have gained their independence and stability, must take all necessary measures to justify the efforts already made and to achieve the objectives that have been set. Fulfilment of the tasks at hand and finding solutions to the problems we face constitute the baggage that this respected Organization and its Member States will take with them into the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now call on the head of delegation of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, His Excellency Mr. Abuzed Omar Dorda.

Mr. Dorda (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Opertti on his accession to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. His election is a tribute to his friendly country and an expression of confidence in his ability to shoulder this great responsibility.

I also take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko for his skilful guidance of the deliberations of the previous session of the General Assembly. Furthermore, I would also like to express my country's high appreciation to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his initiatives, which have helped ease tensions in a number of regions, and for his efforts in making a series of serious proposals for the reform of the United Nations and to reactivate its role, thereby allowing it to perform the functions entrusted to it by the Charter.

The United Nations is the only Organization which enjoys universal membership. That is why it is the sole forum qualified to deal with urgent international, political, economic and social problems. To address these questions effectively, it is essential, first and foremost, to observe the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which must govern both the work of the Organization and the conduct of its Members. Our commitment to the principles of sovereign equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and abstention from the threat or use of force requires us to oppose the ambitions and practices of certain countries that seek to impose their hegemony and influence and to monopolize privileges.

The mandated powers of the General Assembly, in particular, should be expanded to allow it to play its rightful role, which is based on equality among all its members and on the fact that they all deliberate on an equal footing, including in their consideration of

questions of international peace and security. It would be helpful in this respect to establish a mechanism to enable the Assembly to oversee the work of other organs, including the Security Council, and to hold them accountable to it. Any wealthy country in arrears that cares about the United Nations should pay those arrears immediately and unconditionally, because they are to blame for the financial deterioration affecting the activities of the Organization.

The reform of the United Nations will remain incomplete without reforming the Security Council to eliminate the privilege of the veto power. Historically and in terms of justice, equality and democracy, there is no longer any justification for that power. My country was the first to call for the abrogation of the veto power in the second half of this century. Moreover, it is essential to remove the current imbalance in the membership of the Security Council, not by granting certain countries permanent membership, but through an increase in the number of its members, based on the principle of full sovereign equality among States and the application of the principle of equitable geographical distribution in both categories of Council membership: permanent and non-permanent. The reform of the Council should, first and foremost, respond to the needs of the developing countries, which constitute the majority of the United Nations membership, and to the need to avoid selectivity.

Despite the efforts of African countries and their Organization, conflict is on the rise and economic conditions are further deteriorating on that continent. Whatever development or increase in income they achieve goes to servicing debts that weigh heavily on them all. In his report on the situation in Africa, the Secretary-General explains that this situation is the result of the policies adopted by the colonial Powers at the 1885 Congress of Berlin to partition the continent. These policies remain the root cause of conflict in Africa. The report further indicates that Africa's problems, including political instability in some parts and economic underdevelopment in most of the continent, were caused by those who drew the political borders of African countries. We call for the cancellation of Africa's debts and for the continent to be dealt with on new and fair bases, not just as a source of raw materials and a market for the consumption of manufactured goods.

The responsibility for all that has happened and is still taking place on the African continent falls to those who caused it in the first place. Therefore, it is high time for the States that colonized Africa, exploited its resources and enslaved its peoples to apologize to the continent and to pay full compensation for all the losses it has incurred as a result of colonialism.

The imposition of restrictions on international trade and the legislation of extraterritorial laws require serious action on our part to confront and put an end to them. Member States are called upon to support and vote in favour of the relevant draft resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly at this session and not to recognize such unilateral laws, which undermine the lofty principles of the United Nations Charter, flagrantly violate the rules of international law, encroach on the sovereignty of Member States and blatantly interfere in their internal affairs.

The question of Palestine is still awaiting a solution. All developments, past and present, serve only to confirm what my country has repeatedly stated: Occupation by force and the dictation and imposition of surrender can never lead to peace. No support for the occupation and the settlement policy or undermining of the balance of power will help to establish peace. The displaced Palestinians living outside their land are far more numerous than those who live on Palestinian territory. What kind of peace is it that prevents a people from returning to their territory, their homeland?

The continued occupation of the Syrian Golan since 1967, the occupation of southern Lebanon, and the way in which the Security Council has been prevented from implementing its resolution 425 (1978) are further proof of the weakening of the United Nations as a result of the intervention of the major Powers. In this respect, we would ask: Why does the Security Council insist on the implementation of some and not all of its resolutions? So long as the United Nations remains paralysed by the blatant interference of the powerful, who exploit it only to serve their own interests and prevent it from acting when there is a question of deterring or repulsing aggression by their allies, this glaring injustice will continue to push the Middle East towards the abyss.

The achievement of the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones are facing major obstacles. In the Arab East, the rulers of Tel Aviv still refuse to adhere to the NPT. They refuse to place their nuclear facilities under the control regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. They continue to develop their nuclear capabilities with the financial and technical support of the United States, the very country

that, under the pretext of saving the world from chemical weapons, threatens to attack any Arab country, including my own, merely for building a pharmaceutical plant. The recent destruction of the Sudanese pharmaceutical factory under such flimsy pretexts, later proven false, is still fresh in our minds.

Nobody should be deceived by the utterings of the rulers of Tel Aviv to the effect that the Arabs and their weapons are a source of danger. Neither Libya nor any other Arab State constitutes a threat to the peace of the region, let alone the whole world. These are countries that neither produce nor export weapons. Washington has destroyed the weapons that Iraq once had and has imposed embargoes on other countries to prevent Iraq from importing arms. The real danger to security in the region and the entire world comes from the Israelis, who possess hundreds of nuclear warheads. So long as nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction are not destroyed in all the countries that possess them, any lesser effort will represent a great attempt to deceive the whole world.

Since the dawn of time, humanity has been afflicted by a phenomenon that has been exacerbated in modern times: national and international terrorism. The annals of history record terrorist acts, their victims and their perpetrators. If we peruse these records, much is revealed. They show that those self-styled fighters against terrorism were the first to perpetrate terrorism. By posing as fighters of terrorism, they are trying to cover the terrorist crimes they have committed and still commit against other countries and peoples. Their history is no more than a series of terrorist acts against other peoples, which have reached the stage of total annihilation of entire peoples.

These self-styled fighters of terrorism have attempted to brand movements of liberation and the struggle for freedom and against occupation as terrorist. They still describe all fighters for freedom and independence as terrorists. But they fail miserably when most fighters for the freedom and independence of their countries eventually triumph. Suddenly, those who fought against these freedom fighters and backed those who enslaved them are ready to roll out the red carpet for them, organize the greatest receptions and award them the highest medals. This General Assembly embraces a number of such leaders every year and, only a few days ago, gave the fighter and leader Nelson Mandela an outstanding reception.

Libya is proud to have been among the countries that supported these leaders during their struggle. Libya takes pride in their victories. Libya took that position at a time when those who now claim to fight terrorism used to describe those leaders as terrorists. Libya knows that the change in these countries' attitudes following the triumph of revolutionaries and freedom fighters neither reflects principled morality, nor aims at atoning for past mistakes. It is due to a desire to preserve their interests and to gain greater political and economic advantages.

When we talk of terrorism, we should know our subject. Our talk must be objective and we need to agree on a single definition of terrorism. We should apply the same criteria and the same rules and laws. We must also implement the same measures and procedures. We cannot condemn terrorism and fight it when it hits a certain country, then turn a blind eye when it hits other countries or other peoples. The occupation of Lebanon, the surrounding of its capital and the attack on Qana were acts of terrorism. The aggression against Libya in 1986 and earlier was terrorism. The invasion of Grenada was terrorism. The kidnapping of a head of State is terrorism. Maintaining military bases on other peoples' territory is terrorism. Navies' threats and attacks against peoples and violation of their territorial waters — this is terrorism. Attempts on the lives of national leaders are terrorism. The downing of a Libyan civilian airplane over Sinai was terrorism. The downing of the Iranian airplane in the Gulf was terrorism. Forcing the Security Council to react to a missile that fell in the sea and preventing it from reacting to missiles that were intentionally launched against a pharmaceutical plant in a peaceful city, Khartoum, and from sending a mere fact-finding mission — this is terrorism. In this respect, we forcefully support Sudanese demands for investigation and compensation and condemn this terrorist aggression.

Are we supposed to condemn terrorism only when it touches a certain country or countries? Should we turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to what is being committed by that country or those countries against humanity as a whole? This, too, is terrorism. Terrorism will be eradicated only when its causes, not just its results, are addressed; not by committing similar terrorist acts. We cannot fight terrorism with terrorism. As one Arab poet says:

> "Practise what you preach. Great shame on you if you do not."

We in Libya condemn terrorist acts, their perpetrators, their sponsors and those who finance them. We are ready to cooperate with all countries that truly want to put an end to terrorism. Libya, in a letter to the

Secretary-General dated 9 January 1992 (document A/46/840), was the first to call on the United Nations to convene a special session of the General Assembly to be devoted to international terrorism.

In this respect, we wish to note that some people insist, in and out of context, on linking Islam and Muslims to terrorism. This in itself is another kind of terrorism. The very name of Islam is derived from the word *salaam*, which means "peace". A person is considered a Muslim when others are safe from his words and his deeds. The greeting of Muslims, when coming or going, is *assalamu alaikum*, meaning "peace be upon you", and the answer is "and the same to you".

It seems believable that, as has been demonstrated in some works and studies, certain people can determine their own identity only by identifying their enemy. Now that the ideological enemy, embodied for several decades in the communist ideology, has disappeared, they have chosen Islam as their new alternative adversary. Upon the disappearance of the international opponent, the former Soviet Union, they chose the Muslims to be the new enemy.

At this juncture, let us ask the following questions, though we know in advance that they will go unanswered. First, who recruited, transported, financed, trained and armed those who fought in Afghanistan during the presence of Soviet troops there? Secondly, who called these people *mujahidin* when they fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan? And who now calls them terrorists? How and why did yesterday's *mujahid* become today's terrorist? Thirdly, where do the leaders of the organizations which plan and supervise the implementation of terrorist actions in their homelands live? Sisterly Algeria is not the only example. Fourthly, who protects these people? Who finances them? Who arms them? Who trains them? Where? And Why?

These and other, similar questions will not be publicly acknowledged by the parties concerned, but that does not mean that there is no answer. Islam is the victim. Muslims are the targets and victims of terrorism, alongside the rest of third world peoples. God Almighty addresses his Prophet and Messenger in the Koran by saying:

> "We sent thee not, but as a mercy for all creatures."
> (*The Holy Koran, XXI:107*)

Verily spoke God. The Prophet of mercy preached the religion of mercy, not terrorism.

My country has always sought to make the Mediterranean a region of security, cooperation and peace. It is a source of satisfaction that in July this year we issued a joint statement with Italy which eliminated many aspects of the legacy of the past and laid down a solid basis for cooperation to serve the interests of both countries and peoples and contribute to the strengthening of peace and stability in that strategic part of the world. We believe that this is a model that should be emulated in other arrangements, including European and Mediterranean partnerships. Among the issues on which the peoples of the Mediterranean should cooperate and act in solidarity is the foreign military presence in the region. We in Libya would again like to express our concern about this presence. We again call on foreign States to dismantle their military bases around the Mediterranean and withdraw their fleets from its waters. Their presence poses a danger to the peoples of the region.

The world is still witnessing a continuation of old disputes and conflicts such as those in Cyprus, Afghanistan, Angola and Somalia. These conflicts have persisted for too long, despite all the efforts made to resolve them peacefully. The international community should increase its efforts to settle these disputes and end the suffering of their peoples.

The people of Iraq are suffering from international sanctions which are unprecedented in their severity and cruelty. These sanctions have resulted in human tragedies which could never be accepted by principled human beings. Other countries have exploited these sanctions in order to achieve their own selfish political purpose of destroying Iraq, violating its territorial integrity and breaking up its unity. This will have disastrous consequences sooner or later. Furthermore, it is a violation of the Charter, the principles of international law and all international norms.

In the Horn of Africa the situation in Somalia is still a source of great concern. My country has consistently made efforts to assist the competing Somali factions solve their differences. We will continue those efforts with a view to reaching a solution to ensure Somali national reconciliation that is satisfactory to all Somalis. The Jamahiriya, which has the honour of presiding over the group of Sahel and desert countries, has submitted a serious initiative for the settlement of the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. This initiative, which enjoys full recognition, remains the best framework for the solution

of the border dispute between the two countries and the normalization of relations between their two peoples.

I should now like to provide an account of the latest developments in the dispute between my country and the United States and the United Kingdom over the Lockerbie question. In this regard, I shall deal with the latest, not the oldest, of these developments. On 21 July the media announced that the United States and the United Kingdom were considering the possibility of accepting the two suspects for trial in a third country, which may be the Netherlands.

Libya contacted the President of the Security Council and most of its members, as well as the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to welcome this development in the event that it became an official position. To prove and confirm its seriousness, Libya suggested to them that the Secretary-General should look into the matter once it became an official position and contact all the parties to seek to reach a practical and serious formula that would respond to the interests of all the parties and could gain their approval. Our intention was that if such a formula were submitted to the Security Council, its approval would be assured and its implementation would thereby be a foregone conclusion.

At the time, Libya expressed a number of fears and concerns to which it drew attention and warned against the Security Council approving any formula that did not address such fears and concerns in its enthusiasm of feeling that there was a positive development on the issue.

At that time — the last week of July — we drew attention to the fact that Libya was concerned that the other party might have taken its approach for certain short-term reasons: first, to circumvent the two Judgments of the International Court of Justice; secondly, to pre-empt the decision taken at the Ouagadougou summit; thirdly, to forestall a potential resolution at the Durban summit; fourthly, to continue the sanctions imposed on Libya; fifthly, to distance between the international community and support for Libya by misleading it into believing that the other party had already accepted the proposals of regional and international organizations; and sixthly, to take the whole question back to its starting point.

At that time, before the official position of the two countries was made public and as a test of the seriousness of the other party, Libya stressed the need for certain considerations. First, we requested a guarantee that the two suspects would not be handed over or moved to either the United States or the United Kingdom. Secondly, we asked for a guarantee of their legal, religious, social, personal and health rights throughout the various phases of the trial. Thirdly, we requested that the Libyan judicial authorities and the defence of the two suspects should handle all technical, legal questions relevant to the legal aspect of the trial. We were now talking about a legal and not a political matter. The legal and judicial authorities of the countries concerned had done so with regard to their side of the question.

Our intuition proved right and our suspicions were confirmed. On Monday, 24 August 1998, the United States and the United Kingdom addressed a joint letter to the Secretary-General to which they attached the text of a draft agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Government of the United Kingdom, together with the text of a bill which the United Kingdom intended to enact as law to enable the Scottish Court to conduct the trial in the Netherlands.

On Tuesday, 25 August, the two countries submitted a draft resolution to the Security Council. On Wednesday, 26 August, the draft resolution was formally submitted to the Council. On Thursday, 27 August, as we expected, the Security Council approved the draft resolution, motivated by a feeling that it was a positive development, without pausing to discover the poison that was slipped surreptitiously into the honey.

The letter sent to the Secretary-General, together with its detailed and complicated legal attachments, was approved without giving even the members of the Security Council a chance to study them. Libya then requested the Council to postpone acting on the resolution because it and its attachments required consideration by the competent Libyan judicial authorities. These documents had not at that time reached Libya and had not even been translated into Arabic.

The adversary and the arbiter in the Council prevented the Council from responding to Libya's request. During the review session last March, the same adversary and the same arbiter prevented the Council from studying the Judgments of the International Court of Justice, officially referred to it by Libya, under the pretext that these Judgments needed to be studied by legal experts in their two countries. This stark contradiction in positions and criteria we leave to the judgement of the Assembly, and we have no doubt that it will reach the right conclusions.

Security Council resolution 1192 (1998), adopted on 27 August 1998, suggests that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has not implemented the requirements of Council resolutions, as in paragraph 1 it

> "Demands once again that the Libyan Government immediately comply with the above-mentioned resolutions."

This refers to resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992), 883 (1993). It also suggests that Libya has done nothing in that connection, whereas Libya has responded fully to all of these resolutions.

Paragraph 4 of resolution 1192 (1998) states that

> "the Libyan Government shall ensure that any evidence or witnesses in Libya are, upon the request of the court, promptly made available at the court in the Netherlands for the purpose of the trial".

To ask Libya to provide evidence and witnesses contradicts logic and law. It is not Libya that has accused the two suspects. It is the United States and the United Kingdom that claim to possess evidence which justifies their suspicions. They alone have the responsibility to provide the evidence and the witnesses for the prosecution in order to prove their case. This demand in itself proves that those two countries have no evidence to support the accusation of our two citizens. On what, then, is this suspicion based? It is a suspicion still in search of evidence and witnesses. The best quotation we can cite in this respect is the statement made by the freedom fighter and leader, President Nelson Mandela, last week in Washington: "I know of no system of jurisprudence anywhere in the world where the accused is required to produce witnesses for the prosecution."

On the whole, in the text to which I have been referring, Libya sees interference in the work and procedures of the court, a limitation on the rights of the accused to defend themselves, and an abrogation of Libya's legal rights guaranteed under international law and custom governing procedures and the provision of proof.

Security Council resolution 1192 (1998) referred to the joint letter dated 24 August 1998 from the Governments of the United Kingdom and of the United States, contained in document S/1998/795, to which is annexed the text of the intended agreement between the Governments of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and of the United Kingdom. In its article 16 (2), that agreement refers to the

> "transfer [of] the accused from the premises of the Scottish Court [in the Netherlands] to the territory of the United Kingdom ...,
>
> "(a) ... for the purpose of trial by jury in Scotland". (*S/1998/795, annex II*)

However, the initiative adopted by the Security Council, which in essence is a political initiative, is based on what was adopted by the regional and international organizations whose letters were cited in the preambular part of Security Council resolution 1192 (1998). Here we would like to refer in particular to the content of the joint letter from the Secretaries-General of the League of Arab States and of the Organization of African Unity, annexed to document S/1997/497. Any text that would make it possible to transfer the two suspects to any place other than the Netherlands, under any circumstances, runs counter to the regional initiatives accepted by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. That is only some of the poison in the honey: the world has heard that the United Kingdom and the United States have agreed to have a trial in the Netherlands. Now they talk about Scotland, the United Kingdom and the United States. We shall clarify this presently.

The letter then states, in paragraph 4, that, "If found guilty, the two accused will serve their sentence in the United Kingdom". Moreover, the intended agreement states in article 16 (2) (b) that the accused would be transferred to the United Kingdom "for the purpose of serving a custodial sentence imposed by the Scottish Court following the conviction of the accused".

That contradicts the initiative; I cannot believe that anyone understood the initiative to mean anything other than that the trial would take place in a third country. This provision runs counter to the general understanding of the initiative, that the purpose of the trial of the two suspects is to reveal the truth in the tragic incident of Pan Am flight 103, and not to exact revenge on two Libyan citizens who are merely suspected, without evidence. It is the understanding also that the ultimate venue of all the trial procedures would be in a third country: in the Netherlands, and not anywhere else. The agreement by the various parties to the holding of the trial in the Netherlands is a political solution that came about as a result of political action. The place where the sentence should be served, if, God forbid, they are convicted, should be the same place as the trial. This is part of the political solution.

They claim that Scottish law stipulates that sentences should be served in Scotland, because Scottish courts sit in Scotland. But this court will sit outside Scotland, so any sentence should also be carried out outside Scotland. The court is, exceptionally, sitting in another country, so the sentence must be served in the country where the trial takes place, not in Scotland.

Paragraph 8 of Security Council resolution 1192 (1998) reads in part that the Council

> "decides that the aforementioned measures shall be suspended immediately if the Secretary-General reports to the Council that the two accused have arrived in the Netherlands for the purpose of trial before the court described in paragraph 2 or" — and here pay attention to this new poison in the honey — "have appeared for trial before an appropriate court in the United Kingdom or the United States".

In a dispute that has lasted for more than seven years, this is the first time that the Security Council has adopted a resolution asserting that the trial can take place before a court in the United Kingdom or the United States. I have addressed a letter to the Secretary-General indicating that the proposal of the League of Arab States and the Organization of African Unity regarding a trial under Scottish law, before a Scottish court, at the International Court of Justice in The Hague defines an "appropriate court". But the resolution says

(*spoke in English*)

"an appropriate court in the United Kingdom or the United States", not an appropriate British or United States court.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

For the first time, the resolution refers to such a venue. There is no need for the addition of a reference to an "appropriate court in the United Kingdom or the United States" — unless the purpose is to transfer the two suspects to the Netherlands as a transit station before transferring them to one of the two countries mentioned in that paragraph. If that is the case, it can be qualified only as institutional piracy condoned by Security Council resolution. The world is unaware of this situation. I know that members are busy with their own concerns, but I remind them that I am citing the text of the new Security Council resolution.

Along with the rest of the international community, we have agreed to a trial before a Scottish court sitting in a third country, which could be the Netherlands. We have agreed to a Scottish court, to Scottish law and to Scottish judges, in the Netherlands. Those are the terms described in the decisions of the regional organizations. But what does that paragraph mean?

But Libya never subscribed to these new terms, and the regional organizations never agreed that a trial should take place in the United States or in the United Kingdom. To suggest that this is the "appropriate court" referred to in paragraph 16 of resolution 883 (1993) is to attempt to deceive the international community, and is yet another example of the poison in the honey. The Council was misled into accepting this because of the existence of a feeling that there was a change in the position of the two countries.

Another meaningless reference came in paragraph 8 on the relations between the Libyan Government and the French judicial authorities, relevant to the explosion of Union de Transports Aériens flight 772. This question has nothing to do with the subject of the initiative upon which resolution 1192 (1998) is based. Moreover, it is well established in the Security Council that Libya has done all that has been required of it by the French judge in this respect and that the French authorities have expressed their total satisfaction, and this was endorsed by the Security Council.

Libya believes that the optimal, pragmatic and prompt solution lies in conducting negotiations among all parties with a view to reaching an agreement on the practical procedures for the application of the option of trying the two suspects before a Scottish court in a neutral country — the Netherlands — as called for by the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement held in South Africa at the beginning of September 1998.

Should direct negotiations prove impossible due to the opposition of the United States and the United Kingdom, these negotiations can be conducted through the Secretary-General. The proposed agreement should determine all practical measures, the commitments of each party and the rights and guarantees to be accorded the two suspects and their defence team. It should also precisely state what all the parties are required to do so that the trial of the two suspects will be the final phase of the implementation of Security Council resolutions, not the first phase. This should lead to the lifting of the sanctions imposed on Libya and put an end to any

attempts to change positions or otherwise circumvent the situation under the pretext that Libya has not fully complied with Security Council resolutions — because Libya has fully done what it has been required to do.

Even the exchange of goods is governed by agreements and contracts that regulate and explain the responsibilities of various parties, suppliers and exporters. Goods are insured and reinsured against all risks. These are people, human beings we are talking about here. They are not going to the Netherlands for tourism; we're not going to bid them farewell, have a nice trip. Having said that, we wonder what is meant by electing to hold the trial in a military base used by the Americans in the Netherlands? Is the base that the Americans use as members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization the only place in the Netherlands where the trial can take place? What is this?

Following are some of the questions that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya deems it necessary to resolve and reach an agreement on. First, there is a need to agree on listing, clarifying and determining, in advance, the witnesses needed — not only from Libya, but from all parties. The defence team should have the right to receive and peruse all evidence and cross-examine all witnesses. Secondly, there needs to be agreement on the place where the suspects would spend the time of their sentence in case of conviction, either in the Netherlands or in Libya. Thirdly, we need guarantees that the two suspects will not be extradited or transferred to either the United States or the United Kingdom for any reason whatsoever at any phase of the trial. Fourthly, there needs to be an agreement on the security, legal, personal, social, health and religious rights of the two suspects during the various phases of the trial.

We need to conclude an agreement between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya specifying how the two suspects will be transferred to the Netherlands and guaranteeing their security and safety, during their transfer, stay and their return at the end of the trial. Such an agreement should be endorsed by the Security Council and implemented under the supervision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm that the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has accepted a trial of the two suspects before a Scottish court in accordance with Scottish law, presided over by Scottish judges, that would sit in the Netherlands, but we will not accept the setting of any conditions in relation to the implementation of that proposal. Libya is ready to take this exceptional road in order to reach a solution to the dispute that would satisfy the interests of all parties and in order to settle the outstanding legal issues through direct negotiations or through the Secretary-General.

Libya has not interfered in the agreements concluded by the other parties for the purposes of the trial. Also, it has not authorized anyone to decide on her behalf matters relating to her citizens, because this is its constitutional right and duty. The United Kingdom and the Netherlands can conclude an agreement; this has to do with the Netherlands court and because the Netherlands is the seat of the court, but as far as the Libyan citizens are concerned, we never authorized anyone to conclude any agreements on our behalf. We are responsible for our citizens, the suspects included. They have a team of lawyers to defend them. We do not interfere in other States' affairs, nor do we want anyone to interfere with our affairs either.

We would like to confirm our seriousness, our desire and our willingness to close the file of this case and other files as well, and open a new chapter in our relations with the countries concerned based on mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency The Honourable Taufa Vakatale, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education and Technology of the Republic of Fiji.

Ms. Vakatale (Fiji): My country and my delegation wish to take this opportunity to extend to Mr. Didier Opertti our warmest congratulations on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. His election to the high office is a tribute to both him and his great country. My delegation also wishes to convey our deep gratitude and appreciation to the outgoing President at the fifty-second session of the Assembly, His Excellency Hennadiy Udovenko of Ukraine, who presided with boundless energy, vision and competence.

Change is a fact of life in our world. Change covers new paradigms, new systems, new technologies, new patterns in international relations and new initiatives aimed at lasting peace and international security.

Thus we welcomed the wind of change in the area of nuclear disarmament when we adopted the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) two

years ago. My country was the first to ratify the Treaty. But the more things change, the more they remain the same. Some months ago, India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests. My delegation calls on India and Pakistan to reconsider their nuclear pretensions and to become parties to the CTBT. We call on all countries to become parties to this Treaty and to fully implement the provisions of the Treaty.

My delegation would like to see the CTBT improved to set a clear time-frame for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. As an imperative for meaningful change, my delegation urges all nuclear-weapon States to destroy all stockpiles and arsenals of nuclear weapons, and in so doing rid our world, once and for all, of nuclear weapons.

My delegation also calls for meaningful change regarding the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. Let us rid our world of chemical weapons and biological weapons. We call on all nations to become parties to the landmines Convention so that we can all act collaboratively and meaningfully to rid our world of landmines as well.

Over the past three decades, the developing countries of the world have waged a desperate struggle for fundamental change in international economic relations in order to attain economic justice and facilitate economic development and sustained economic growth — thereby laying the foundation for eradicating the problems of high unemployment, hunger, disease and poverty, which ravage the least developed and developing countries. The establishment of the World Trade Organization was supposed to have laid the foundation for a new system of international trade relations which would contribute to the development of developing and least developed countries.

As a developing island State, we seek Members' support and indulgence in understanding the special needs and the vulnerability of small island States. They should be differentiated further, as a separate group of disadvantaged States. The work has already started on the determination of criteria for such differentiation based on a vulnerability index.

Among the members of the United Nations organizations, development is measured through the human development index, which takes into account the expansion of gross domestic product, real gross domestic product per capita, life expectancy of the population and other yardsticks. However, the hurricane that recently struck a number of islands in the Caribbean, the devastating tidal wave in northern Papua New Guinea and extreme drought conditions in many countries, including mine, demonstrate the vulnerability of small island States to natural disasters. We also sympathize with China and Bangladesh, which have suffered from extensive and prolonged flooding.

In Fiji, the Government right now is providing special food and water relief assistance to more than 54,000 households, or more than a quarter of Fiji's total population.

Because of the drought, we are expecting this year a 50 per cent reduction in our production of sugar, which is our main export, and there is no guarantee for an improvement for next year. Also, because of the drought, we do not have seeds of sufficient quality to allow for a quick recovery in the foreseeable future. Such is our vulnerability, and no part of the aforementioned index has any real relevance to our calamity. Things may have changed, with new names and new systems, but, alas, it is the same old story.

Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I appeal to the United Nations development support system to consider special schemes of assistance covering natural disaster situations. There are already examples of such schemes in the Lomé Convention between the European Union member countries and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States.

The creation of the World Trade Organization was intended to lay the foundation for changes in international trade by ensuring an open, secure, equitable, transparent and predictable multilateral trading system. Yet developing countries continue to be paid paltry prices for their primary products; they continue to be denied access, under one pretext or another, to the markets of the developed countries; and even the little export trade we have is being taken away, as in the case of Saint Lucia and its banana exports to the European Union. Export trade is vital to economic development and sustained economic growth in developing countries. My delegation calls for remedial change in international trade — facilitating better prices for primary products, greater access to the markets of developed countries and the retention of special trade arrangements for the essential exports of developing countries.

We in the developing countries require substantial foreign investment capital flows to promote economic development, sustained economic growth and social and human development. Regrettably, there has been little change in the volume of international capital flows, the pace of such flows and the direction of such flows. Where flows have taken place, they have been directed to a handful of developing countries. My delegation calls for strategic change in the area of foreign investment through substantial, increased and continuous capital flows to developing countries.

We in the developing countries require new, environmentally sound technologies to facilitate and sustain economic development and social and human development. There is a dire need for us to participate in and benefit from appropriate, environmentally sound technologies. Yet despite our pleas for the cooperation and assistance of the industrialized countries for reciprocal change — by the transfer of appropriate technologies at an affordable price, by assisting us in institutional development and capacity-building to accommodate the transfer of such technologies and by assisting us with funding, education and training programmes to facilitate the transfer and stimulate increased cooperation at a business-to-business level — the situation has remained virtually the same.

Sustainable development is critical to small island developing States such as mine, for which the paramount challenge is to balance economic and social development with environmental protection. Six years have passed since the first Earth Summit in Rio, and the second summit has come and gone. Little progress has been made in securing new sources of financing for making the transition to sustainable development. My delegation calls for stimulating change on the issue of sustainable development through the prompt and full implementation of the commitments and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

The reform of the United Nations to make it more relevant to today's world and more responsive to the needs, aspirations and hopes of the international community in all aspects of international relations has engaged our attention over the years, and more so last year with the presentation of the Secretary-General's reform programme. If the reform of the United Nations is to bring about purposeful change, then the Charter of the United Nations should be revised to remove the anachronisms contained in it and to make it more relevant to our world today and tomorrow. A geographical reconstruction of regional groups adapted to the geopolitical dimensions of today's world ought to be implemented. We submit that the current set of regional groups should be increased numerically and reconfigured. My delegation further submits that the membership of all United Nations organs and organizations should be governed by the principle of geographic rotation, so that each country can enjoy its right as a Member to serve on all United Nations bodies. The current system of rotation has resulted in some countries becoming de facto permanent members of the United Nations organs and organizations.

The Security Council is a classic example of things remaining the same. Membership on the Council, permanent and non-permanent, continues to be geographically inequitable. The system of rotation does not provide all Member countries the opportunity to serve on the Council, and the system is further aggravated by the number of regional groups and their geographical configuration. My delegation continues to call for a review of the membership and operations of the Council.

International peace and security has been one of the main pillars of the United Nations. This year marks 50 years of United Nations peacekeeping as an instrument for maintaining international peace and security. Yet we all are still beset by conflicts of one kind or another, and lasting peace and security in our world continues to elude us. My country is fully committed to the international peacekeeping missions of the United Nations.

In fact, this year also marks 20 years of participation by my country in United Nations peacekeeping. I should like to take this opportunity to pay homage to our brave sons who have made the supreme sacrifice in the service of international peace and security.

Because of the eminent contribution of international peacekeeping to permanent and lasting peace and security in our world, we call on all Member countries to settle their assessments for peacekeeping operations promptly and fully. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express to the Secretary-General our sincere and deep appreciation for citing Fiji, among other countries, as consistently among the stalwart nations ready to contribute troops, police and observers and to take other steps to improve overall readiness.

My delegation deeply appreciates the meaningful change that has taken place in the scale of assessments of Member countries. My country welcomes the new assessment rates. But while such a beneficial measure has

taken place, the arrears in the annual contributions of some Member countries continue to plague our coffers and to place the finances of our organizations and our many and varied international programmes in jeopardy. My delegation calls on all Member countries which are in arrears in payment to pay those arrears promptly, fully and without conditions.

At a time when so many changes have taken place in our world in the areas of human development and human rights, the bleak future of the world's indigenous people has remained the same. My delegation calls on the international community to be more responsive to the need for a better future for our indigenous people. In the interest of meaningful change, my delegation calls for the speedy adoption of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the setting up in our Organization of a unit for indigenous peoples' affairs, the granting to the indigenous people of the right of self-determination, and the establishment of an international fund to promote and facilitate their survival, development and progress.

My delegation is aware that the most pervasive violation of human rights is violence against women, which cuts across all boundaries of culture, economic status and geography. In this connection, the Government of the Republic of the Fiji Islands has maintained the commitments entered into at Beijing through the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and met its obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In promoting greater participation by women in economic and social development, a major initiative by the Government will be the launch by our Prime Minister, in the next few days, of its National Plan of Action. Addressed in the Plan will be areas such as the development and strengthening of women's enterprises, gender parity at decision-making levels, training, promotion and appointments, domestic violence, sexual abuse and child abuse, and review of laws which disadvantage women.

One area of meaningful change in our world has been the Convention on the Law of the Sea. It enjoys universal support and almost universal participation, and all States benefit from the stability and certainty that has been achieved by the Convention. The work being done with respect to the oceans requires the support of the international community if the achievements of the Convention are to be consolidated and its promise of benefits to the peoples of the world realized.

Sadly, the more things have changed in the Middle East, the more they seem to have remained the same. Peace in the Middle East remains as elusive and perpetually shifting as the Negev desert. The international community must play a stronger and more decisive role in getting the peace process on track, keeping it there and ensuring that it moves at a faster rate. We call on all the parties to the crisis to pursue positive and genuine negotiations to effect meaningful change through compromise and achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

My delegation calls for conciliatory change in Lebanon with the full implementation of resolution 425 (1978) in order that Lebanon may fully enjoy its territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence.

Similarly, my delegation believes that a concessional change is necessary to find a solution to the situation in Kosovo. My delegation calls on the parties to the internecine conflict to enter into constructive dialogue on a political solution that should include a substantially greater degree of autonomy and meaningful self-administration in the territory.

The issue of Taiwan has remained unchanged. China and Taiwan contribute significantly to the development of the South Pacific region. My country is committed to a one-China policy and enjoys very good relations with both China and Taiwan. We therefore warmly welcome the renewed talks between China and Taiwan and hope that they will lead to profitable change on the Taiwan issue.

Likewise, on the Korean peninsula, we urge South Korea and North Korea to continue their dialogue to amicably resolve their common future.

The removal of tension and the resolution of remaining international disputes in East Asia are vitally important to the maintenance of peace and security in the entire Asia and Pacific region. For the Fiji Islands and other small island countries in the South Pacific, permanent peace in the wider Asia-Pacific region has a direct bearing on our economic future.

Given my country's commitment to global peace, the Government of the Republic of the Fiji Islands

strongly condemns international terrorism in all its violent forms. It is a scourge, and all States should treat it as such. My delegation urges universal condemnation of such indiscriminate acts of violence, and we pledge to cooperate with all other members of the General Assembly in preventing such acts and in bringing those responsible to justice.

We welcome the recent adoption at Rome of the statute of the International Criminal Court, and we express our gratitude to the Italian Government for hosting the conference at which this took place.

Last but not least, my delegation wishes to inform the Assembly that a new Constitution of Fiji was promulgated on 27 July 1998. Pursuant to the coming into force of the new Constitution, the name of our country has been changed to the Republic of the Fiji Islands. An innovative feature of the new Constitution is that it makes provision for the formation of a multi-party system of Government through representation in the Cabinet of all political parties that secure a certain number of seats in Parliament.

The new Constitution also makes provision for the appointment of a Human Rights Commission and a Constitutional Offices Commission. The Government of the Republic of the Fiji Islands considers the promulgation of the new Constitution as laying the foundation for meaningful change in our multiracial country. General elections under the new Constitution are due to be held next year.

Change is a paradox in international relations. If we are to fashion a new and better international community in which international democracy is to prevail and in which the development and progress of all nations is to be engendered, we, collectively and in collaboration, have to inculcate change in the many issues which my delegation has enumerated. We must make meaningful change in our world an international imperative.

The Acting President: The next speaker is His Excellency Mr. Boris Shikhmuradov, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Shikhmuradov (Turkmenistan): First of all, permit me to congratulate Mr. Didier Opertti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly. I would also like to address words of gratitude to Mr. Hennadiy Y. Udovenko for the dynamic and competent manner in which he carried out his duties as President of the previous session of the General Assembly.

We have very attentively studied the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and have a very positive opinion of it. The quiet revolution begun by the Secretary-General one year ago — the institutional reform of the United Nations — has become an irreversible process tied to the rapidly changing conditions of our new era. One of the major problems confronting the community of nations is how to better understand emerging socio-economic forces and the modalities of globalization, and how to channel them towards the fulfilment of our requirements.

Acting within the framework of the United Nations, Turkmenistan is expanding the scope of its responsibilities within the world community of nations. I have the honour to inform the Assembly that yesterday, here at United Nations Headquarters, Turkmenistan signed the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Furthermore, today, during my meeting with the Secretary-General, I handed him the instrument of Turkmenistan's accession to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, signed by the President of Turkmenistan. Although we know that accession by several countries more is still lacking for the Convention's entry into force, Turkmenistan by its example would like to call on other States Members of the Organization to join the Convention, adding their voices in its support — or rather in support of their citizens working for the United Nations.

The Secretary-General's proposal concerning real partnerships between the United Nations and multilateral regional organizations seems to be highly relevant, because regional organizations are especially effective in early warning and preventive diplomacy, as well as in finding optimal ways to carry out globalization.

The proposal on the establishment of a special unit to combat crime, terrorism, drug and weapons trafficking and money-laundering is very timely. A recent wave of terrorist acts around the world, including the bombings in Tanzania and Kenya and the killing of Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan, requires consolidation of efforts by the world community and decisive action. Turkmenistan resolutely fights against those negative phenomena and is prepared to contribute to the implementation of special United Nations programmes aimed at eradicating these evils.

Turkmenistan welcomes the strengthening of the framework mechanism for interaction among all organizations of the United Nations system. I would like to take this opportunity to express on behalf of the Government of Turkmenistan our gratitude to the missions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other United Nations agencies, the positive results of whose work in Turkmenistan cannot be overestimated. Turkmenistan also expresses its gratitude to the donor countries supporting those programmes in our country.

We are gravely concerned about the continuing armed conflict in Afghanistan because it has a negative impact on the stability of the region and on its economic development. Its impact also bears on Turkmenistan, which has one of the longest borders with Afghanistan, stretching for nearly 1,000 kilometres. Turkmenistan shares the opinion that there is no alternative to a peaceful, negotiated settlement in that country and that violence gives birth to violence and will only lead the process to a dead end. That is why we in Turkmenistan believe that the road to peace in that long-suffering nation lies through political negotiations among all parties to the conflict under the auspices of the United Nations. Turkmenistan fully supports the efforts of the United Nations, its Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his Special Envoy, Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, and joint steps undertaken within the framework of the 6 + 2 mechanism. Turkmenistan's President, Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, maintains constant contacts regarding this matter with the Secretary-General and with the leaders of neighbouring States. Turkmenistan will continue to cooperate closely with the United Nations in this regard. Interaction among Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and all the parties concerned should lead to the termination of one of the most protracted and violent conflicts of this century.

In view of the global changes that are taking place in the sphere of international relations, Turkmenistan believes that development of the Central Asian region objectively deserves the attention of the world. The States of that region have opened to the world a huge geopolitical and geoeconomic potential, enormous natural wealth, and geographical and transport opportunities. Turkmenistan is vigorously seeking alternative routes for delivery of its energy resources to international markets. In developing a strategy for the implementation of pipeline construction projects, we have proceeded and continue to proceed on the basis of various options. Pipeline infrastructure based on a variety of options will ensure an increased volume and greater diversification of energy deliveries, and will enable us to stabilize and guarantee their international distribution.

There is one more issue that I would like to dwell upon in this context. It concerns inter-State pipeline routes. The problem of international pipeline routes can well be compared to that of international sea straits, which was one of the most complex political and diplomatic challenges at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Today such straits ensure freedom of navigation, including for landlocked States. Their international legal recognition is called for by the economic and political interests of the world community in developing mutual relations. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, adopted in 1982, reaffirmed the importance of maintaining freedom of navigation through straits and passages in archipelago waters and the need to do so. Freedom of navigation, which existed in the past as an international custom, was legally codified as one of the most important principles of international law.

In this context, of great interest are modern problems relating to the transportation of energy resources to international markets. It so happens that these enormous resources are located far away from the world markets. Usually it is landlocked nations that possess such resources, and the choice of delivery routes and the location of transnational pipelines has turned into a major problem of our times. The resolution of this problem lies at the centre of the geopolitical and geoeconomic interests of the States that own the resources, the transit States and the consumer countries.

In this respect, Turkmenistan promotes the initiative of security guarantees and unimpeded transit of energy resources along international pipelines. This initiative has already been discussed with a number of State leaders, as well as with the United Nations Secretary-General. We advocate the establishment of an international legal mechanism designed to protect the interests of the producers, transit countries and the consumers. It is necessary to fully preclude the possibility of pipelines being used as a means of political pressure and economic domination. The process of globalization in international economic relations calls for the elaboration of an international convention that will govern the regime of inter-State pipelines and guarantee their functioning. Turkmenistan regards this matter as one of the most

important challenges of the coming twenty-first century and is prepared to sponsor a document on this matter in the United Nations.

A change in the geopolitical situation has brought about a new correlation of interests in the Caspian Sea region, thus making it necessary to elaborate new approaches for the determination of the status of the Caspian Sea. The uncertainty that exists today with respect to this issue hampers rational use of the enormous potential of the Sea by the littoral States. A majority of the Caspian Sea States today favour the option of dividing the Caspian Sea into different sectors. Turkmenistan also supports this approach, just as it had previously supported the concept of condominium.

What is most important to us under either of the two approaches is that the interests of all littoral States should be fully taken into consideration and that cooperation in the Caspian Sea region should be built on the basis of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit. The Caspian Sea should be a sea of accord, and its wealth should be a common heritage of all littoral States, with each of them having a right to a corresponding national share of the sea. Turkmenistan believes that the search for a new legal status of the Caspian Sea, which would require all littoral States to look for reasonable compromises and display readiness to have an appropriate perception of new realities, should be ensured by means of monitoring by the United Nations.

Today the process of establishing a new international legal status of the Caspian Sea confronts a number of difficulties fraught with very negative consequences for regional stability. Under these conditions we consider that United Nations involvement would be highly appropriate.

We are happy to see that today there is a growing tendency towards restraint with respect to the attempts aimed at associating extremism and other negative phenomena with the world of Islam. The Muslim world is multifaceted and diverse. It faces a great range of universal and global problems of development. In this context, there emerges an objective need for mutual understanding and dialogue among various religious trends, a need for restraint and tolerance. The President of the United States, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Prime Minister of Turkey and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Germany and Russia have expressed very wise and politically promising ideas and statements during the current session. In this respect, we find of great interest the idea voiced by the President of Iran, Mr. Khatami, on declaring the year 2001 the year of dialogue between civilizations. The point is that the resolution of today's global challenges is inconceivable without a meaningful dialogue, an exchange of opinions and a search for ways to resolve the most pressing problems.

It is already three years since Turkmenistan began pursuing its policy as a State of permanent neutrality. Turkmenistan's neutrality is not a shell that protects it from dangers and tribulations of the outside world. On the contrary, it is a position of strength that allows us to actively influence the situation in our region and the world as a whole and to develop effective international cooperation. We seek to maintain equal and equitable relations with all nations, and our national interests are pursued through economic openness and political impartiality. Proceeding from this position, Turkmenistan attaches great importance to the United Nations role as a unique international institution in which all countries of our planet have equal access to international debate and the resolution of problems that concern them.

Turkmenistan believes that on the eve of the twenty-first century the United Nations should acquire additional powers and responsibilities, and strengthen its current ones, by becoming a major factor in establishing a climate of mutual respect and trust both in separate regions and the world as a whole.

In conclusion, I would like to recall a proposal made by the Secretary-General regarding the holding of the General Assembly session in the year 2000 in the form of the Millennium Assembly. That Assembly would give all the Member States of the United Nations a unique opportunity to take a look into the future, to ponder how they perceive the United Nations of today and to speculate on what kind of United Nations they will support in the next century.

The Acting President: The next speaker is Mr. Mustafa Osman Ismaiel, Minister for External Relations of the Sudan, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Ismaiel (Sudan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Opertti on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. We are confident that his vast experience and capabilities will lead this session to success. I would like to assure him of the full cooperation of my delegation. Allow me also to express our gratitude to his predecessor, the former Foreign Minister of Ukraine, for his commendable efforts and to express similar congratulations to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi

Annan, and his able assistants for their efforts to ensure an improved performance by the Organization, to bolster its status and to achieve its lofty objectives.

There are many questions in my country, in our Arab and African region, and in the rest of the world. There is a war raging between our neighbours on the eastern and southern borders. All of these questions need to be debated.

The considerable improvement in the economic situation in the Sudan is reflected in the latest International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports, which indicate an increase in the growth rate and a reduction in the inflation rate. We expect the Sudan to become an oil-exporting State in the next few months. This is an issue which we are very happy to brief you on.

There is also the constitutional evolution and political openness in the Sudan, culminating in the approval by the Sudanese people in a referendum of a new constitution earlier this year. This will enhance the institutions of civil governance and the peaceful transfer of power based on a system of political pluralism. These developments are important to political stability in Africa's largest country, the Sudan, a land of vast untapped resources.

I also wish to talk about the humanitarian situation in the Sudan and the improvements in that situation. Sudan appreciates the efforts of the international community and expresses its full commitment to cooperate in the facilitation of these efforts. This is a matter which deserves further elaboration.

There are also the peace efforts in southern Sudan and the positive response of the Sudanese Government to the calls for a ceasefire by the international community, including the Security Council, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the European Union. This ceasefire was rejected by the rebel movement, resulting in the continuation of war and more suffering for the citizens. This also is a matter which requires further elaboration.

All these questions require more details, but I will leave that to other committees and forums, as I shall concentrate today on one single issue: the American aggression committed against my country on 20 August 1998. This American act, if not properly addressed, could undermine all the achievements made by our people through years of struggle and suffering.

It would be appropriate to recall the events which began on 7 August. On that day the explosions took place in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam. That same evening the Sudan condemned those heinous terrorist acts. We conveyed our condolences to the Presidents and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the United States, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania. I also made telephone calls to my Kenyan and Tanzanian colleagues expressing Sudan's fullest readiness to cooperate to the maximum possible extent in the efforts to search for, apprehend and punish the culprits.

The American Administration requested fly-over permission for their military aircraft in order to evacuate the wounded and the dead from Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam, and their request was granted. That was followed by another request for open fly-over permission for their military aircraft, to which we responded promptly and in good faith, as it was, in our view, a humanitarian request which deserved a response. Subsequently, contacts in this regard between the Sudanese and American security authorities were begun. We welcomed these contacts and gave assurances of our full cooperation.

But, all of a sudden, within minutes and without warning, the Sudanese people were shocked on the evening of Thursday, 20 August, by a grave act of terrorism, as heinous and cowardly as those of Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi. The "Al-Shifa" pharmaceutical plant, which only a few hours before that event was producing life-saving medicines for children, women and the elderly in the Sudan and which was a model of the economic development of my country, was completely destroyed.

Some of the innocent Sudanese citizens, employees of the factory, lost their lives under the rubble, while others lost their sight, or some of their limbs, or were left swimming in blood. Families of the victims and the rest of the employees were suddenly bereft of the sources of their livelihood.

A few minutes later, we watched the message of the American President on television, where he stated that the United States armed forces had launched air strikes against the Sudan and Afghanistan. He said that they had destroyed a plant in the Sudan linked to Osama Bin Laden which produced chemical weapons.

This is the American perspective, which I have conveyed to you clearly. What then is the Sudanese perspective?

I would like to state clearly and confidently that the factory produced medicine — and nothing but medicine. The plant belonged to the private sector. It was owned by a Sudanese businessman, and it had no link whatsoever with Osama Bin Laden. The factory was financed by the PTA Bank of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). It was one of the largest of its kind in the Middle East and Africa.

In his speech at the inaugural meeting of this session of the Assembly, President Clinton spoke about the tolerance and greatness of Islam. We appreciate what he said and would like to add that Islam calls for mutual respect between civilizations, cultures and religions. Islam calls for dialogue — indeed, all the revealed religions call for dialogue — and all of these religions abhor and renounce violence and injustice, because injustice begets hatred.

All faiths call for justice. The principal rule of law stipulates that the accused is innocent until proven guilty. However, here we are faced with a situation in which the Sudan was accused by the United States, the Sudan was condemned by the United States and the Sudan was punished by the United States. Thus, the United States has acted as the adversary, the jury and the judge — the opponent and the arbiter. The whole world rejected the American aggression and its justification.

Allow me to mention here some of those who supported our position in the Sudan: the Arab League, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Group of 77 and China, and large sectors of the American community, including former President Jimmy Carter, former Attorney-General Ramsey Clark, a number of Congressmen and the American mass media. Our position was also supported by high-ranking officials of Western countries, including presidents and foreign ministers, as well as by the British, Jordanian and American engineers who took part in the construction and operation of the factory and who continued their technical association with it until it was destroyed. A number of legal experts and lawyers from Western countries, as well as international trade unions and non-governmental organizations also voiced their support.

In spite of this, the United States continues to oppose the dispatch of a fact-finding mission by the Security Council. The American officials claim that they analysed a sample of the soil near the factory and found that it contained chemical precursors used in the production of VX — a nerve gas.

If they are so sure of what they found, we wonder why they object to the dispatch of a fact-finding mission by the Security Council so that the Council can be the judge. The factory has been destroyed, true; but the soil is still there and the remnants and the rubble of the factory are there. The fact-finding mission can easily collect soil samples and examine the machines, look into the documents and establish the facts about the output and ownership of the factory. This is the sole demand of the Sudan now.

Last week the Group of Arab States presented a draft resolution to the Security Council. The draft does not seek to condemn the United States for its violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a Member State. It only requests the dispatch of a fact-finding mission to verify the allegations that were the basis of the decision by the United States to launch a strike against a medicine factory in the Sudan.

It is the responsibility, indeed the obligation of the Security Council to do so. This is only a procedural measure to ascertain the facts — a procedure which the Council has always followed in similar situations. Therefore the Sudan and the entire international community call on the Security Council to send an urgent fact-finding mission to the Sudan so that the international community can verify the allegations upon which the United States based its decision to strike the medicine factory.

The Sudan recognizes that sending a fact-finding mission is a legitimate request by a developing country that holds dear the principles of international legitimacy and believes strongly that the fight against terrorism, which we condemn in all its forms, whether committed by individuals, groups or States, must be based on the principles and channels of international legitimacy and cooperation and the renunciation of force as a means for hegemony and domination.

We in the Sudan recognize that the United States is a super-Power, and we do not seek to involve ourselves in a confrontation or altercation with that super-Power. On the contrary, we are keen on establishing correct relations with the United States on the basis of mutual respect, common interest and constructive criticism. We are ready to engage in a dialogue with the United States and to cooperate with it on all issues of common concern.

The people of the Sudan respect the American people and are eager to maintain good relations with them. It is incumbent upon the two Governments to work on reflecting this desire and to strengthen these historic relations.

We have paid tribute to the countries that provided humanitarian assistance to those affected by the war in southern Sudan, including the United States. However, we are perplexed by the provocative statement recently made by the spokesman of the American Administration when he announced the donation of $25,000 to the victims of floods in the Sudan. The statement claimed that despite its differences with the Government of the Sudan, the American Administration is concerned about the welfare of the Sudanese people.

The American Administration launched 17 cruise missiles to destroy the pharmaceutical factory. Each of those missiles costs $1 million, for a total of $17 million to destroy our factory. Now the United States announces its contribution of $25,000 to the Sudanese victims of the floods, while the damage caused by the floods is estimated to exceed $40 million. Had the American Administration genuinely been concerned with the welfare and well-being of the Sudanese people, it would not have attacked and destroyed one of our main economic entities, which produced over 50 per cent of the essential and life-saving medicines which the Sudan requires.

Therefore, on behalf of the Sudanese people, we say to the American Administration, that we want our factory back, the factory we built with our toil and sweat and which cost us millions of dollars. We need the medicine of which our people were deprived as a result of the destruction of the factory, particularly in this time of the flooding crisis which caused rampant diseases and epidemics, according to United Nations reports.

Allow me now to briefly reflect on some of the conflicts that are taking place in our area, in view of their direct impact on peace and security in the region.

I start with our eastern borders, where the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea will undoubtedly lead to a deterioration of the situation in the region. The Sudan, which still hosts hundreds of thousands of refugees from the two neighbouring countries, is strongly affected by this conflict. Hence, from this rostrum we urge the two neighbouring countries to exercise self-restraint and to resort to peaceful means to settle their differences. We also hope that the efforts of the OAU will succeed in reaching a peaceful settlement to this dispute.

On the other hand, we are following with great concern the developments in our southern neighbour, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is suffering from external interference in its internal affairs. We hope that the efforts of the African countries will be successful in assisting the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in maintaining peace and stability on its territory.

As regards the peace process in the Middle East, hopes for a final settlement have evaporated as a result of the Israeli intransigence, which placed hurdles on the road to peace.

The Sudan welcomes the General Assembly resolution upgrading the Palestinian participation and supports the steps taken by the Palestinian leadership to declare the state of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. The Sudan also denounces the Israeli attempts to Judaize Jerusalem and change its demographic composition and legal status.

Furthermore, the Sudan supports the rights of Syria and Lebanon to regain their occupied territories in the Golan and in southern Lebanon, and it calls upon the international community and the Security Council to exert pressure on Israel to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and to heed the call for a just peace in order for the region to enjoy peace and security.

The embargo imposed on Iraq has lasted for too long, and the suffering of the Iraqi people has deepened. Thousands of women, children and elderly people have lost their lives because of the lack of food and medicine, and the world is wondering when the blockade will come to an end. The latest impasse between the United Nations Special Commission and Iraq could result in catastrophic consequences in the area. This should prompt the Security Council to intervene by carrying out a comprehensive review of Iraqi compliance with Security Council resolutions with a view to lifting the embargo. The Sudan commends the efforts of the Secretary-General and expresses the hope that these efforts will lead to a breakthrough in the current impasse.

The Sudan also wishes to stress the importance of resolving the issue of the detainees and the missing Kuwaitis as a humanitarian question, and it calls for redoubling regional and international efforts to settle this problem so that the women and children who have waited so long can be reunited with their husbands and parents. This would also eliminate the causes of tension and restore solidarity and reconciliation between Arab nations and States.

As regards the issue of Lockerbie, we are very much concerned with the embargo imposed on the sisterly Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, our neighbour. The damaging consequences of this embargo have spilled over from Libya to the neighbouring countries, including the Sudan, which has hundreds of thousands of citizens living in the Jamahiriya. It is a cause for sadness that scores of those citizens have lost their lives while trying to cross the vast desert between the two countries as a result of the air blockade imposed on the Jamahiriya. While welcoming the recent positive developments in this issue, we stress the need to provide the guarantees requested by the Jamahiriya, as referred to by the President of Burkina Faso, the current Chairman of the OAU, in his statement before the Security Council last week.

Conflicts in Africa have caused numerous difficulties, including the problems of refugees and displaced persons. As a result, Africa has become host to the largest number of refugees in the world. Their number is estimated at more than 8 million, and they live in the harshest conditions.

In its efforts to put an end to the suffering of refugees and to find durable solutions to this problem, the OAU decided to convene the first ministerial meeting of the Committee on Refugees and Disappeared Persons in Khartoum in December 1998 at the level of foreign minister. We in the Sudan look forward to the international community's effective participation in and support for this conference in order to ensure its success. The countries of the continent are hopeful that the conference will produce results which would assist in dealing with this long-standing problem.

I should like to conclude with a verse from the Holy Koran:

> "God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin. He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion. He instructs you that ye may receive admonition." (*The Holy Koran, XVI:90*)

The meeting rose at 2.05 p.m.